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Indian-American Self-Representation:

Transmission of Culture through the Entertainment Medium of Film

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Indian-American Self-Representation:

Transmission of Culture through the Entertainment Medium of Film

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, who has always said to me, "Just take the best of both cultures."

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Indian-American Self-Representation:

Transmission of Culture through the Entertainment Medium of Film

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This study examined Hindi film representations of people of Indian origin residing outside India, Hollywood film representations of people of Indian ethnicity in America, as well as self-representation in Indian-American films. The researcher used the quantitative methodology of content analysis to examine representations in Hindi and Hollywood films and the qualitative methodology of textual analysis to examine self-representation in Indian-American films. The sample for the content analysis included Hindi films released between 1995 and 2005 and Hollywood films released between 1984 and 2005. The sample for the textual analysis consisted of 10 Indian-American films that were examined as transmissions of culture within their social and historical contexts as well as through available news sources.

This study found that the majority of Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin residing abroad and the majority Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in America had migrated from India. The results also revealed that Hindi films stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized Indians residing outside India and Hollywood

films stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized people of Indian ethnicity in America. It also found that Hindi and Hollywood films rarely depicted second-generation Indian Americans. Indian-American films produced mostly by Indian immigrants primarily focused on Indian immigrants and sometimes adhered to Hindi film stereotypes when depicting second-generation Indian Americans. Indian-American films produced mostly by second-generation Indian Americans primarily focused on second-generation Indian Americans. The majority of characters in Hindi, Hollywood, and both immigrant and second-generation Indian-American films were male.

Because of the limited representation of Indian Americans in the four activities of communication: surveillance, correlation, transmission of culture, and entertainment (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959), as well as in communications literature, this study of Indian-American representation is an important contribution not only to journalism literature but to the field of journalism itself. It has brought to the forefront a significant but underrepresented group, highlighted this group's diversity and cultural nuances, revealed how the portrayals of such nuances led to the subversion of stereotypes, and emphasized how through the act of self-representation, the transmission of culture takes place through the entertainment medium of film.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1948, one year after India became independent from British colonizers,

political scientist Harold D. Lasswell identified three functions of communication:

surveillance, correlation, and transmission of culture (Lasswell, 1948). Eleven years

later, sociologist Charles R. Wright modified these three functions, which he called

activities of communication, and added a fourth one: entertainment (Wright, 1959).

These four functions provided a framework for understanding the intersection between

media and various populations and cultures. In his theorizing, Lasswell treated the

audience for mass communication as virtually homogenous while Wright maintained that

audiences were heterogeneous (Wright, 1959). In fact, in his later writings, Wright

expanded Lasswell's definition of transmission of culture to include "transmission of the

social heritage" and the assimilation of groups of people such as immigrants and referred

to this activity as education or "socialization" (Wright, 1986). Lasswell and Wright's

sociological analyses, however, did not provide much insight into the four functions of

communication and their intersection with non-dominant cultures.

In U.S. news media, non-dominant cultural groups that are hardly included (or not

included at all) in the surveillance function and in the process of correlation are

automatically denied the opportunity to transmit, or educate others about, their cultures.

Although historically Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian

Americans have been defined as minority or non-dominant groups in the United States,

the sub-cultural groups within these four non-dominant groups have been obscured by the

dominant media. One such group is Indian Americans. Even the U. S. Census habitually

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obscures Indian Americans by categorizing Indian Americans under "Asian," an oversimplifying term that includes a multitude of countries comprising an entire continent. Such blanket terminology signifies the way certain groups and subgroups are regarded or, in this case, disregarded.

Until very recently, Indian Americans generally have not been included in the surveillance function in U.S. media (Sreenivasan, Spring 1998); consequently, there has not been much, if any, information to correlate, interpret, or transmit. The emergence of Indian Americans, therefore, is one of the untold stories by the news media. Indian Americans are virtually unseen and undocumented and rarely included as a separate group; they are presumably under "Asian American," a broad term used even in published communications literature on diversity in news coverage (Poindexter, 2008). What, then, is the relationship between the four communication functions of the media and Indian Americans? Through the lens of the two communication functions, transmission of culture and entertainment, this study will concentrate on their intersection with Indian Americans and Indian-American cinema, a medium rendered relevant to the study of mass communication by Wright's addition of entertainment. This study will show that despite virtually being ignored by the U.S. news and entertainment media, Indian Americans have begun to tell their own stories through film and transmit their "social heritage from one generation to the next" (Lasswell, 1948, p. 38). This study will also demonstrate that by transmitting their culture through the medium of film, Indian Americans have managed to accomplish something that the two largest film industries in

the world have not been able to achieve: the expression of Indian-American culture

through the act of self-representation.

Indian Culture and American Culture

To the casual observer, India and America[1] are quite different from each other.

India is of the East and America is of the West; India is old and America is young.

Whereas the ancients in India envisaged the entire earth as one family, American culture

emphatically depends on science and technology to bring the earth together through the

spread of knowledge and globalization. While India relies on its inherent faith,

philosophies and spirituality, America depends on invention, ingenuity and innovation.

In spite of these differences, however, India and America do have some things in

common. For example, they are both the largest democracies in the world and they both

are homes to pluralist societies.

According to *The Cultural Heritage of India*:

> India's cultural heritage is not only one of the most ancient, but it is also
> one of the most extensive and varied. To it have contributed, throughout
> the ages, many races and peoples, who have either temporarily come into
> contact with India or have permanently settled within her borders, joining
> the ranks of her children and helping to evolve a distinctive Indian culture,
> the keynote of which is synthesis on the basis of eternal values
> (Radhakrishnan, 1993, p. xxxvii).

As with India, people of many racial and ethnic backgrounds have also come to America

either to temporarily study and work or to permanently live in the United States. Just as

India provided and continues to provide sanctuary to people of all kinds of religious

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[1] Throughout this study, the term America and its other forms are used in reference to the United States of America.

persuasions from Zoroastrianism to Judaism, from Islam to Christianity (World Factbook, 2004), the United States has served as a refuge for Europeans facing religious persecution and social and economic hardship. To the present day, the United States continues to serve as a newfound home for those seeking social and economic freedom, rendering the country diverse in many ways. In light of America's racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity then, it is therefore not surprising that some have described American culture as a melting pot, meaning "the assimilation of diverse races and ethnicities" (Paek & Shah, 2003); however, because "American culture does have unique and definable contours" (Boewe, 1972, p. v), it may be better explicated as a diverse culture in and of itself as well as an embodiment of several diverse cultures, that is, a culture comprised of many separate and distinct cultural components. In other words, American culture is a continuously evolving composite culture in novelty. Given the paths of origin and assimilation of these two cultures, it can be said that not only are India and America two of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, they also may be the most culturally potent and influential forces of the world.

Transmission of Culture, Entertainment, and Indian-American Culture

Although historically the processes of evolution of both of the American and Indian cultures are indeed dissimilar, like most countries, America and India have similar means of cultural exposition. While points of a culture are reflected in human behavior, mannerisms, social values, language, literature, and music, other parts of a culture may be visually expressed through a myriad of mediums, such as painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, magazines, and television. Film is also a salient and illustrious

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expression of culture or "transmission of culture" and form of entertainment (Wright, 1959). In fact, a notable similarity between India and America is their extensive film industries. In India, the prolific Hindi film industry[2] towers over all; in America, the Hollywood industry thrives. Both in their own ways are rare examples of film industries that have provided and continue to provide hundreds of thousands of people all over the world with hundreds of films per year (Rampal, 2005). Two large and diverse cultures which produce two colossal commercial cinema industries – but what happens when these two cultures converge? Indeed, what happens when the seeds of a diverse ancient culture of the East are planted in the soil of a diverse and youthful cultural environment of the West? Indian-Americanness (Bacon, 1999). A fascinating fusion ensues and the resultant is Indian-American culture, but a major question is: how do the Hindi and Hollywood film industries depict Indian Americans? Why are Indian-American films being produced when the two largest film industries in the world are supposedly available for the representation of Indian Americans and Indian-American culture?

Why Indian-American Films?

While Indian film production in general is an interesting phenomenon, there are several reasons for studying Hindi, Hollywood, and Indian-American films specifically. First, Indian communities exist almost all over the world, including Europe (and particularly the United Kingdom) (Power et al, 2000), Africa (Bacon, 1999; Mogelonsky, 1995), and Canada; due to the differing levels of establishment of each of these

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[2] The Hindi film industry is sometimes referred to as Bollywood, a questionable slang term that takes the first letter of the Hindi film industry's capital, Bombay (the name of which in 1995 reverted back to Mumbai, the city's original name before colonization), and plays on the name Hollywood.

communities and cultures, it would not be judicious for the purpose of this study to group these diverse cultures and their films together. Second, the types of socio-economic and cultural issues faced by Indian emigrants and people of Indian descent born outside India differ from continent to continent, country to country, generation to generation (Farver et al, 2002; Bacon, 1999), and group to group (Paek & Shah, 2003; Hastings, 2001; Reece & Palmgreen, 2000). Third, the study of the resultant culture of the Indian and American cultures is a fascinating one. Fourth, a comprehensive study of these selected Indian-American films has not yet been attempted, and although Canadian and British films may be referenced occasionally to stress specific points in this analysis, this is a deliberate and concentrated study of Indian-American films. Fifth, both of these countries, India and America, share an enormous cinematic following worldwide so it is appropriate to examine the portrayals of people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films and depictions of people of Indian origin (Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans) in Hindi films. Furthermore, the analysis of these depictions compels one to investigate the need for Indian-American cinema with respect to the Indian-American diaspora. Lastly, it is important to recognize that the dominant cultures of the major film industries in India and America are the cultures that dominate Hindi and Hollywood films; in other words, the dominant culture in the Hollywood films is American culture and the dominant culture in Hindi films is Indian culture. Consequently, it is unlikely that Indian Americans (and Indian-American culture) are going to be portrayed as the dominant group or dominant culture in a Hindi or Hollywood film. Even if Indian Americans are depicted, it seems likely that such characters in Hindi and Hollywood

films would be shown as minorities or members of the non-dominant group. This is why the study of self-representation in Indian-American films as a form of self-expression and transmission of culture (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1986) through the entertainment medium of film (Wright, 1959) is important.

Rationale

This study is relevant to the field of journalism for several reasons. A major part of newspaper and news magazines is comprised of entertainment news, particularly reviews of films. From the colossal Hindi film blockbuster to the modest Indian-American film, prestigious newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and even *The Wall Street Journal* are providing film reviews[3]. Even news organizations such as CNN and MSNBC are covering film and the impact of cinema as an industry. But what is known about the context of these films? What is really known in the mainstream about the Indian-American population? What is known about the Indian-American experience? With Indian Americans rarely being covered in the press (Srineevasan, Spring 1998), with Indian Americans hardly being covered in communications literature, with Indian Americans being cloaked by the ambiguous term Asian American, and with scarce Indian-American representation in even entertainment forms of communication, such a study is necessary and particularly relevant not only as a an academic contribution to the literature in journalism but as a contribution to the field

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[3] Some examples of reviews of Indian-American films in *The New York Times* are: "He Wants to Be What He Can't Be," a review by Stephen Holden of Indian-American film *American Desi* (2001), "American Chai," a review by Lawrence van Gelder of Indian-American film, *American Chai* (2002), and "Bollywood Discovers New Jersey's Subplots," a review by Dave Kehr of Indian-American film *Flavors* (2004).

of journalism itself. So far as this researcher is aware, this study is the first attempt made at a detailed study of representation of Indian Americans across four types of films.

It is crucial to recognize that Indian-American films are the primary source of Indian-American self-representation in terms of visual and mass culture. But how does Indian-American cinema fit into this spectrum of cultural expression? In order to understand Indian-American cinema and its images as transmissions of culture as well as its purpose and context, it is important to understand representations of people of Indian origin (Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans) in Hindi films and representations of people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films. This study will use quantitative and qualitative methods to explore these representations.

Dissertation Overview

To fully understand and appreciate the study of representation in Hindi, Hollywood, and Indian-Americans films, Chapter 2 provides a socio-political and cultural background of India through a historical account. Chapter 3 outlines the development of cinema in India and the impact of the West and focuses particularly on the Hindi film industry. Chapter 4 highlights previous studies and their findings in the literature review section and also describes the theoretical framework for this study. In chapter 5, the design of the study is delineated and the methodologies implemented in this study are explained in detail. Chapter 6 provides the quantitative results of the content analysis of this study while chapters 7 and 8 provide the qualitative analysis, in-depth textual analyses of Indian-American films. Following these results and analyses is chapter 9, the discussion and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF INDIA

In order to understand the transmission of a culture through the entertainment medium of film, it is imperative to be acquainted with the culture being "transmitted." "India's culture is enshrined in the philosophy and the religion, the thoughts and the practices, the knowledge and the faith" (Mathur, 1974, p. 1), and the subsequent social development of the Indian people through the ages. A brief historical survey of India's socio-political and cultural background will help create a greater awareness of present-day India's cultural standing; it will also emphasize the development and significance of Indian cinema as a means of expression and will lead to a better understanding of the significance of portrayals of Indians in film.

Ancient India

The ancient civilization of India is the common basis on which generations and generations of diverse races and neighboring areas have built the indigenous civilization (Majumdar, 1988). The continuity of the Indian civilization, as compared to other ancient civilizations of the world, is a unique phenomenon. The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia, for example, have long ceased to exist. Even the later ancient civilizations, Roman and Grecian, are extinct (Majumdar, 1988). Indian civilization and culture continue to flourish even in the face of modern technologies and scientific advancement. The entire ancient period of over 3000 years in Indian history can be loosely classified into the Vedic Age, the Age of Imperial Unity, the Classical Age, the Imperial Kannauj, and the Rajput Era (Majumdar, 1988).

Although little is known about the political history of ancient India, a vast amount of information about ancient India's culture and civilization is available. The lack of chronology in India's ancient history is in part due to ancient India's focus on its civilization and culture rather than its political events (Majumdar, 1988). The picture of ancient India's culture and civilization is represented in the mass of literature collectively known as the Vedas, which is divided into four sections called: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda, and Atharaveda (Apte, 1988).

Indian civilization is primarily based on a high moral value system derived from its religion and philosophy (Apte, 1988). Since at least the Vedic Age, the entire Hindu social structure rests upon a system of stratification called the caste system (Dubois, 2002). In ancient Indian society, the caste system was based on the dictums laid down in the *Manu Smriti*[4] (Apte, 1988). An individual's caste was solely determined by one's choice of occupation; in other words, caste was established by the individual's independent choice – not by one's birth (Apte, 1988; Dubois, 2002). Primarily, there were four castes, one of which was the Brahmins. Such persons devoted themselves to the acquisition of spiritual truths and knowledge of matter and spirit (Dubois, 2002). They imparted this knowledge to society in general through writs which later became known as the Brahmanical rites: the birthright, (*namkaransanskar* – naming of the child and drawing up of a horoscope), the threadbearing (*yagyoadavita* – marking the beginning of education; the child attends school after this rite), matrimonial rites (*vivahsanskar* – entering marriage), and last rites (*antimsanskar*) (O'Malley, 1976;

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[4] The governing laws of the Hindu people of ancient India (Apte, 1988).

Dubois, 2002). In ancient times, it was the duty of the Brahmins to perform these rites

for society (O'Malley, 1976; Dubois, 2002). The second caste was called the Kshatriyas.

Also known as the warriors, such persons learned the art of warfare for the expansion of

the state to which they belonged (Dubois, 2002). The third caste, comprised of those who

preferred to trade, was known as the Vaishyas, and the last section was known as the

Shudras which included a number of occupations (O'Malley, 1976; Apte, 1988). Those

who performed menial tasks, the unskilled laborers, were known as the Untouchables

(O'Malley, 1976; Apte, 1988). Because the caste system in ancient times did not relate to

birth but rather to occupation, there were inter-caste marriages (Apte, 1988).

During this period in India, there was also no status differentiation between

women and men on the basis of sex; women were free to move about in society and had

equal rights to education and occupation (Majumdar, 1988; Apte, 1988). They had the

right to study a variety of subjects, including literature and philosophy, science and

religion, and the art of warfare (Majumdar, 1988; Apte, 1988); in fact, many women even

chose to become warriors (Majumdar, 1988; Apte, 1988). Indian women also chose their

husbands through a process known as *swayamvar*[5] (Majumdar, 1988; Apte, 1988), and if

polygamy was invoked, then polyandry was also in vogue (Apte, 1988).

The people of ancient India remained strictly celibate until the marrying age of 25

(Apte, 1988). This stage of their lives was called *Brahmacharya ashram*, a period of 25

years dedicated to studying philosophy, religion, science, medicine, music, art, etc. (Apte,

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[5] In this process, an announcement was made for a list of suitors, who asked for the woman's hand in marriage. After being evaluated, one was chosen by the woman to be her husband and a marriage ceremony was performed (Apte, 1988).

1988). Ages 25 to about 50, the *Grahasth* period, was dedicated to family, family matters and occupation (Apte, 1988). From age 50 to 75, the *Vanprastha* period, they remained the heads of their households but did not deeply involve themselves in the day-to-day domestic matters; instead, the people of ancient India spent most of their time on educational and spiritual pursuits (Apte, 1988). Renouncing the world, some people after the age of 75 eventually left their homes and became forest and mountain recluses to attain Divinity; this period was known as Sanyas (Apte, 1988). A male became a *sanyasi* and a female became a *sanyasin* (Apte, 1988). This search for spirituality led to the creation of religious writings and the evolution of Indian philosophies (Apte, 1988).

Most people after reaching the age of 50 contemplated questions of life and death (Apte, 1988). They pondered upon the fate of the soul and the existence of an afterlife (Apte, 1988). They meditated on nature, creation, and how and why this universe was created (Apte, 1988), and they wondered about the possibility of a Creator, who this Creator was and whether man would be able to perceive this Creator (Apte, 1988). These distinguished people became sages and seers (Apte, 1988). Some of these sages and seers, who did not renounce the world, were known as *rishis*; they led family lives, retired as recluses in the forest, and imparted education (Apte, 1988). In the natural setting of the forest and far from the townships, rishis opened education centers called *Guru Kul* schools (Apte, 1988), the entire education system of which was based on ethics (Apte, 1988), and imparted knowledge to ancient India's youth, called *brahmacharyas* (Apte, 1988), who followed certain disciplines, including strict celibacy (Apte, 1988). Whether they were the children of rich kings or of the poor, they lived together and

learned together (Apte, 1988). They were trained in simple living and high thinking and were taught moral science, the art of warfare, and physical and moral hygiene (Apte, 1988). Brahmacharyas were also learned about civic rights and their duties towards the state as well as towards the poor (Apte, 1988). Instilled in the youth was a sense of duty-consciousness of the body, mind and soul (Apte, 1988), and following this general spiritual education, they chose their specializations (Apte, 1988). The completion of their education was marked with a ceremony, and they were sent back to their communities to embark on the next phase of their lives, employment and family life (Apte, 1988).

Personal realizations of the knowledge of the Divine, of life and the afterlife were collected and documented (O'Malley, 1976). This contemplation, yogic exercises, and deep meditation account for the multiplicity of religious systems and worship of many gods and goddesses (Apte, 1988; O'Malley, 1976). The concept of unity of god also developed side by side (O'Malley, 1976). Over time, these intuitive realizations were transcribed and organized according to subject knowledge rather than chronology (Apte, 1988). Such writings are: the Vedas, the Upanishads, Sutras, the Smriti, Brahmanas, Puranas, Itihas, and the Epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata), all of which "constitute[d] the mainspring of Indian culture" (Mathur, 1974, p. 1). In fact, the Vedic Age was the basis, the foundation, of Indian culture; however, there grew a sharp reaction to the prevalent sacrificial rites of the Vedic Age (Mookerji, 1990). This led to the birth of antitheistic movements such as Jainism and Buddhism (Mookerji, 1990).

While Indian culture remained purely indigenous throughout the Vedic Age (Apte, 1988; O'Malley, 1976), the Age of Imperial Unity, which began roughly around

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320 B.C., entailed a variety of foreign influences that affected Indian culture, including the increased interaction with the ancient culture of Greece (Mookerji, 1990). The Age of Imperial Unity gave rise to the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, who was known for his administration which played a pivotal role in the harmonious relationship with the foreign world, particularly with Greece through trade and even marital alliances (Mookerji, 1990). Partially responsible for Chandragupta's effective administration and diplomacy was his able prime minister, Chanakya, whose famous treatise, *Arthshastra*, has served as a reference book for later administrators (Mookerji, 1990). This age was replete with glory and tolerance under the rule of administrator Ashoka the Great, who was loved for his paternal style of leadership and for his policy called *Dhamma*, which advocated morality, goodness, respect for all religions, peace and prosperity, and the general well-being of his people regardless of their caste or creed (Mookerji, 1990). Ashoka the Great embraced Buddhism; it was he who sent Buddhist monks to various parts of India as well as abroad to propagate Buddhism (Mookerji, 1990). Although Ashoka the Great declared Buddhism as his state's religion, he was a tolerant monarch who allowed other religions to flourish on equal footing (Mookerji, 1990). The citizens of his empire had the freedom to follow any religion (Mookerji, 1990).

The Classical Age pertains to the Golden period in ancient India during which the Gupta rulers not only extended their empire and administered it well, but patronized the arts, literature, mathematics, and sciences as well (Majumdar, 1988). The people under the Gupta Empire were socially progressive and economically prosperous (Majumdar, 1988). Known for his able administration, Monarch Chandragupta was also a

connoisseur of the arts and literature and King Samudragupta was famous for his effective foreign policy (Majumdar, 1988). Sanskrit literature, architecture, classical music and classical dance flourished during this period of peace and progress; cultural attainments of ancient India were at their zenith during the Classical Age (Majumdar, 1988). "[T]he age of Imperial Kannauj … was an era of great strength and achievement in India," (Munshi, 1993, p. vii). This period also embodied the general well-being of the people, continued developments in art and literature, and overall prosperity (Munshi, 1993). Harsha was one of the most famous emperors, known for his administrative skill and political expansion and his charitable disposition (Majumdar, 1989). After Harsha's death, India witnessed multiple independent states under absolute monarchs who ruled different parts of the country (Majumdar, 1989).

The last ancient period of free India, the Rajput Era, lasted from 600 A.D. to 1206 A.D. (Majumdar, 1989). During this period, art and architecture attained new heights but despite these cultural developments, the Rajput states lacked social solidarity and political unity (Majumdar, 1989). This political state continued to exist for over 600 years (Majumdar, 1989). Although the Rajputs were chivalrous people and connoisseurs of art, literature, and architecture, they became known for their interstate rivalry (Majumdar, 1989). They quarreled among themselves thus rendering India vulnerable and susceptible to foreign invasions (Majumdar, 1989). In the early 8th century, Mohammed Bin Kasim of Arabia invaded Sindh, a part of western India (Majumdar, 1993). In the 11th century, another barbaric attack was inflicted upon India by Mahmut of Ghazana (Ganguly, 1989). He invaded, looted and plundered India over a dozen times

(Majumdar, 1989) and was notorious for raiding the Somnath temple and killing Hindus (Ganguly, 1989). At the end of the 12th century and beginning of the 13th century, another invader Mohammed of Ghor attacked the heart of India, and ultimately, Islamic rule was established in India (Saran, 1989; Majumdar, 1989).

600 Years of Islamic Rule

For hundreds and hundreds of years, ancient India had been a set of individual independent states governed by kings who had a deep interest in the welfare of their people (Majumdar, 1989). Ancient India had a stable economy and was home to a freethinking and open-minded society that was also culturally prolific – in scriptures, architecture, music, dance and art, but with a series of barbaric invasions, these days of freedom were soon brought to a standstill (Saran, 1989; Majumdar, 1989). The Turks had established their rule in India as Sultanates in 1206 (Saran, 1989; Majumdar, 1990). The invaders destroyed Hindu temples and using the same materials, built Muslim mosques in their places (Saran, 1989; Majumdar, 1990). Educational centers were also burnt down (Saran, 1989; Majumdar, 1990). The Hindus faced all sorts of atrocities by the Sultans, whose primary weapon of choice was arson (Ghoshal, 1990). Women were kidnapped, raped and forcibly converted to the religion of Islam (Ghoshal, 1990). Some Hindu women, whose Hindu husbands were slain by the Sultans, set themselves on fire for they would rather die than convert and marry a Sultan (Majumdar, 1990). In order to save the remaining Hindu women, Hindu families had no choice but to protect their female family members by relegating them to the home (Majumdar, 1990). Consequently, Hindu women were denied their freedom and education (Majumdar,

1990). Because Muslim women wore *purdahs* (veils that conceals women's bodies), the purdah system was imposed on Hindu women as well (Majumdar, 1990).

From 1206 to 1526, that is, for 320 years, Hindus were enslaved and subjected to the harsh Islamic rule of various Turkish dynasties (Majumdar, 1990). Hindus had no civil rights (Majumdar, 1990). Nevertheless, Hindus still continued to practice their own religion, whether in public or in private (Majumdar, 1990), but when they did so and were caught, they were killed (Majumdar, 1990). Even under pressure, Hindus would not convert to Islam so anyone who refused to follow Islam had to pay a tax known as the Jeziah tax (Majumdar, 1990). Because of this regime, Hindus were forced to completely change their way of life (Majumdar, 1990). People who were once living in a state of freedom physically, psychologically, politically, economically, and culturally and had accomplished so much in the development of ancient India had now been enslaved physically, psychologically, politically, economically, and culturally (Majumdar, 1990). This period of Islamic rule accounts for many of the social rigidities that still exist today in India (Majumdar, 1990).

In 1526, the Mughuls invaded India and the last of the Sultanates were defeated by Mughul leader Babur (Srivastava, 1994). A period of additional Islamic rule, known as the Mughul Empire, ensued (Srivastava, 1994), and the inequality between the Hindus and Muslims continued (Srivastava, 1994). Then from 1556 to 1605, Akbar the Great presided over India (Srivastava, 1994). It was under his reign that Hindus were finally given equal civil rights and the Jeziah tax was abolished (Srivastava, 1994). This policy instated by Akbar was called *Sulh-Kul* (peace with all) and gave Hindus freedom of

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association and freedom of worship (Srivastava, 1994; Srivastava, 1972). The instatement of this policy led to further socio-cultural development and economic prosperity (Srivastava, 1994; Srivastava, 1972). This period in Indian history was a time of cultural fusion that inspired creative developments in dance, art, and architecture and led to a more harmonious integration between Hindu and Muslim communities even decades after King Akbar's rule ended (Srivastava, 1994; Srivastava, 1972).

Quite the opposite of his great-grandfather King Akbar, Aurangzeb proved to be a ruthless warrior and menace to India when he came into power in 1658 (Srivastava, 1994). After jailing his own father, Shah Jahan, creator of the inspirational Taj Mahal[6], and executing his brother to attain the throne, tyrant Aurangzeb destroyed Hindu temples and reinstated the Jeziah tax (Srivastava, 1994). He even banned music (Srivastava, 1994). Aurangzeb's rule finally ended in 1707 when his son Bahadur Shah succeeded him (Srivastava, 1994). Eventually, "several provincial dynasties cropped up because of the weak Mughul rulers, reducing the Mughul empire to insignificance" (Mathur, 1974, p. 3) and with the incessant invasions occurring in the north and the turmoil transpiring between the Marathas and invader Ahmed Shah Abdali, conditions in India worsened (Srivastava, 1994). A new period of degradation had fallen upon India.

India Under British Rule

"The gradual decline in power of the Mughals in the eighteenth century resulted in anarchy in India's political life" (Mathur, 1974, p. 3). The British surreptitiously began to procure power in India through a trade business called the East India Company

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[6] In 1630, the Taj Mahal, a stunning architectural wonder, was built to commemorate Shah Jahan's love for his wife, Mumtaz.

(Majumdar, 1970). From 1740 to 1857, a period of 117 years, this company steadily disabled the economy of India (Majumdar, 1970). "The stage was set for the 'flag to follow the trade' and the English who had come as traders gradually acquired one province after another and within a century became a paramount power over a dominion extending from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from the Indus to the Brahmaputra" (Mathur, 1974, p. 3). Having intruded with imperialistic designs, the British East India Company profited off India's abundant raw materials, produced finished goods in England, and shipped them back to India for sale (Majumdar, 1965). India's "[a]griculture and small scale industries were badly affected and indigenous trade came to a standstill" (Mathur, 1974, p. 3).

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, also called the First War of Independence, was suppressed by the British, but the British government became alarmed and immediately took the reigns of administration from the company, and in 1858, the Queen of Britain also became known as the Empress of India (Majumdar, 1970). Not only had the British deprived India of its economic independence and livelihood, they also had stripped Indians of their citizens' rights and enforced apartheid (Majumdar, 1970). "The breakdown of the political and economic structure had disastrous effects on the socio-religious life" (Mathur, 1974, p. 3). The caste system became rigid because of this economic exploitation (Mathur, 1974; Majumdar, 1965). The damage to the economy led to abject poverty (Majumdar, 1965). Indians were ill-treated as slaves and were subjected to humiliation and inhuman treatment (Majumdar, 1965):

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There were regular whipping houses in Calcutta which charged one anna for each lashing. The slaves themselves had to carry to these houses slips from their masters indicating the number of lashes to be inflicted on them together with fee. The slaves were tied to the stocks and flogged fifteen, twenty times and many fell down unconscious (Majumdar, 1965, p. 279).

Indians were taken as bonded labor and sent to the West Indies, Caribbean Islands, Mauritius and Fiji, and many other colonies all over the globe (Majumdar, 1965). Famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore described the state of India at that time: "In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition and ceased to exercise our humanity" (Mathur, 1974 quote of Tagore, 1933, p. 121). India's social life had begun to express "itself in the revival of customs, superstitions, prejudices, ignorance, fear, feuds, bitterness and parochialism" (Mathur, 1974, p. 4).

The indigenous educational system in India had also declined (Mathur, 1974; Majumdar, 1965). Provincial and deliberately limited, it did not include a broad spectrum of subjects, such as sacred literature, ancient classics, and science (Majumdar, 1965). According to historian Majumdar: "Long subjection to alien rule, lack of contact with progressive forces of the world, and a stereotyped system of education leading to knowledge which was based upon blind faith impervious to reason – all these tolled upon the mental and moral outlook of men and society" (Majumdar, 1965, p. 21-22). The East India Company had already decided in 1835 that all funds acquired for education purposes would be allocated solely to English education (Mathur, 1974). Under this sort of limited education pushed forth by the British imperialists, Indian youth were being fed racist declarations such as "India had no culture worth the name, that her entire past was

a foolish quest after false ideals, that if she really wanted to live and progress, she would have to remould herself thoroughly on the lathe of European civilization" (Mathur, 1974, p. 7). Such confusion inevitably wreaked havoc on young and impressionable minds and would prove to be more "destructive than constructive in social and religious matters" (Majumdar, 1978, p. 90) initially. Young Indian boys adopted English and the mannerisms, customs and food of the British to revolt against Indian culture (Majumdar, 1978; Mathur, 1974).

Christian missionaries traveled to India, but unlike the peaceful community of the Syrian Christians who settled on the Malabar coast in the first century A.D, the "main object of these missionaries was conversion, especially through their educational and medical institutions" and finances and propaganda (Mathur, 1974, p.8). Eventually, however, Indians began to use the English and Christian education not only to respond to criticism of Hinduism and the Indian way of life but also to shed many of the social rigidities (developed during previous reigns) that were inconsistent with "the spirit of Hinduism" (Mathur, 1974, p. 9). From Dante and Petrarch to Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare and Milton, Voltaire, Locke and Rousseau, and many others, Indians read about western thought (Mathur, 1974). They especially embraced the French ideas of "individual conscience over outside authority as well as new ideas of social justice and political rights" (Mathur, 1974, p. 7) which resulted in a "spirit of enquiry [that] not only applied to socio-religious institutions and beliefs but… also penetrated deep into literature, painting, sculpture, and art" (Mathur, 1974, p. 8). This was a period of rebirth for India:

> The … renaissance which took place in India in the nineteenth century [was] generally known for its three facets: the change in the Indian thought current under the hypnotic impact of the West; a positive leaning towards puritanic revivalism as a reaction to the influx of western ideas; and a deliberate attempt at synthesis of the Oriental and Occidental (Mathur, 1974, p. *v*).

To summarize, the renaissance in India was a period of refashioning an Indian culture which not only paid homage to India's past but responded with commensurate spirit to new ideas (Mathur, 1974). In essence, there was a "reorientation of the old to suit the new" (Mathur, 1974, p. 9), and it was this awakening that led to India's political independence.

India's Independence and India Today

The freedom struggle officially began with the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 (Majumdar, 1978). In the beginning, this served as a modern attempt at reforms but eventually became a mass movement when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi[7] showed the way (Majumdar, 1978). The freedom struggle that Mohandas Gandhi led was based on non-violence, *Satyagrahe*, emphasizing indigenous production of fabric by hand known as the Khadi Movement (Majumdar, 1978). *Khadi* was Indian-spun cotton cloth and was worn by Indian nationalists in protest of British-made merchandise

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[7] Gandhi was born in India on October 2, 1869. At the age of 18, Gandhi traveled to London to study law. After attaining his degree, he returned to India to practice law but later had a confrontation with a British officer. In 1893, Gandhi accepted a job with an Indian firm which posted him in South Africa, where he faced discrimination and prejudice and began to deeply contemplate the status of Indians under British rule. Gandhi extended his stay in South Africa to assist Indians in their fight to gain the right to vote. After a short trip to India in 1897, Gandhi was attacked in Africa by a white mob who tried to lynch him. Gandhi continued to travel between South Africa and India and in 1915 returned to India and began to speak at the conventions of the Indian National Congress (Majumdar, 1978).

(Majumdar, 1978). Wearing khadi was an act of Indian patriotism and was symbolic of the hope of an economically (and politically) independent India (Majumdar, 1978).

Gandhi moved the masses through his appeal for self-governance and peaceful agitations against British laws and governance (Majumdar, 1978). Such peaceful agitations included the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and ultimately in 1942, the Quit India Movement (Majumdar, 1978). In 1930, the British government had imposed a tax on common salt (Majumdar, 1978). They had also passed prohibitory orders against the production of salt by private persons or agencies, and the Indian people were expected to buy salt from the government depositories (Majumdar, 1978).

In 1930, Gandhi wrote a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin asking the British government to recognize the misery of the common man and withdraw such laws, but the British ignored Gandhi's request (Majumdar, 1978). To demonstrate against the British, Gandhi marched from an ashram in Gujarat to Dandi, a city by the Arabian Sea (Majumdar, 1978). He started with 75 people and walked some 200 kilometers (124 miles) (Majumdar, 1978). Throughout the march, additional people joined (Majumdar, 1978). When he reached the shore, Gandhi broke the British law by making salt and was arrested by the British (Majumdar, 1978). People all over India began to rise against the salt law (Majumdar, 1978). The Dandi March created a stir among all Indians – Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Parsis, high classes and low classes alike (Majumdar, 1978). It was a mass awakening from a deep slumber for India (Majumdar, 1978). Gandhi advocated communal harmony, amity, and peace in all sections of Indian society and was

for a united India (Majumdar, 1978). He was an apostle of truth and non-violence

(Majumdar, 1978). His philosophies were heard around the world, including the West,

and inspired great leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. (Majumdar, 1978). The United

States of America also supported India's struggle for independence; Franklin D.

Roosevelt pressured British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to grant freedom to India

(Majumdar, 1978).

After considerable sacrifice and great struggle, India finally gained her

independence on August 15, 1947, but only after a partition along communal lines –

much against Gandhi's wishes – into the two separate states of India and Pakistan

(Majumdar, 1978). The aftermath of independence was a holocaust – a ghastly scene

(Chandra et al, 1999):

> The Partition and the violence which accompanied it, led to nearly
> six million refugees pouring into India having lost their all. India
> was in the midst of a communal holocaust. There was senseless
> communal slaughter and a fratricidal war of unprecedented
> proportions […] In the span of a few months, nearly 500,000
> people were killed" (Chandra et al, 1999, p. 77).

There was a forced migration of populations with Hindus coming from Pakistan and

Muslims leaving India (Chandra et al, 1999). They all left their homes and wealth behind

(Chandra et al, 1999).

Whatever remained of India, however, Nehru and Patel united and strengthened it

(Chandra et al, 1999). Although India had recovered her political power in 1947, her

economic state remained bleak for quite some time; the forced migration caused by the

Partition led to economic strain and the towering question of rehabilitation loomed

overhead (Chandra et al, 1999). The discernible material progress in India today is the work of Nehru, who modernized India (Chandra et al, 1999); it was under his direction that in the fields of agriculture industries and scientific development, India made great strides (Chandra et al, 1999).

Today India consists of 28 states. Located in South Asia, India borders the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and Pakistan (World Factbook, 2005). It is near the Indian Ocean which has important trade routes (World Factbook, 2005). India's coastline is 7000 kilometers in length (World Factbook, 2005), and its total area is 3,287,590 square kilometers, approximately one-third the size of the United States of America (World Factbook, 2005). Countries that border India are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, Nepal, and Pakistan (World Factbook, 2005). The climate in India varies from temperate in the northern parts of India to tropical monsoon in the southern parts (World Factbook, 2005). India's terrain consists of the Himalayan mountains and plains in the north, deserts in the west, and plateaus in the south (World Factbook, 2005) and 54.4% of its land is arable (World Factbook, 2005). India has the fourth largest reserve of coal in the world (World Factbook, 2005); other natural resources include iron ore, manganese, mica, natural gas, diamonds, petroleum and limestone (World Factbook, 2005).

India's population is 1.08 billion (July 2005 estimate), and the median age for males and females is approximately 24 years (World Factbook, 2005). India is 80.5% Hindu, 13.4% Muslim, 2.3% Christian, 1.9% Sikh, and 1.8% other (which includes Jewish, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and many other religions) (World Factbook, 2005). Hindi

is the national language of India and serves as the primary language for 30% of the people (World Factbook, 2005). As India is a multilingual subcontinent, there are 14 other official languages, over 250 dialects, and English serves as a link language. The literacy rate is 59% (World Factbook, 2005).

One of the main problems facing India to this day is the ongoing dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir (World Factbook, 2005). India has gone to war with Pakistan twice – in 1965 and in 1971 (World Factbook, 2005). The second war resulted in the creation of Bangladesh with the help of India (World Factbook, 2005). Since the Partition, the issue of Kashmir has been the bane of contention between India and Pakistan. Other acute problems facing India today are the population explosion and unemployment rate (World Factbook, 2005). The unemployment rate among the youth is at its worst and the frustration of the youth is increasing particularly in the metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai[8], Calcutta and Madras (Chandra et al, 1999). Whereas the Indian economy on the whole is rural-based, there is a rush on the part of the youth leaving villages to search for jobs in larger cities (Chandra et al, 1999). The trend of Indian youth migrating to the West and particularly to the United States in search of better jobs has also become discernible since 1960 (Chandra et al, 1999).

Nevertheless, India has made considerable progress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi in the field of electronic media, information technology, space research, and the development of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. India has also benefited from globalization (Chandra et al, 1999):

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[8] Formally renamed Bombay by the British.

The opening of the economy also led to many foreign firms coming in to tap the Indian market. Between 1991 and 2000 the government approved more than 10,000 investment proposals by foreign companies […] They spanned the range from telecommunications to chemicals, and from food processing to paper products […] (Guha, 2007, p. 689).

The facility with English, and the luck to be five or ten hours ahead of the prosperous West, has led to other forms of work being outsourced to India […] The outsourcing of the Western work to Indian workers is taking ever more varied forms (Guha, 2007, p. 688).

Clearly, the West, particularly the United States, is recognizing India's rise as a major global influence, politically as well as economically. According to *Time* magazine, the political relationship between the United States and India is finally forming following the cold war when "relations between New Delhi and Washington were frosty at best, as India cozied up to the Soviet Union and successive U.S. Administrations armed and supported India's regional rival, Pakistan" (*TIME*, 2006). In 2004, however, the Bush Administration recognized India as an ally and "declared India a strategic partner" (*TIME*, 2006). This new relationship comes at a time when India's economy is growing at a fast rate – over 8% annually (*TIME*, 2006). One of the leading industries of India's economy is the Hindi film industry[9].

The largest producer of films in the world, the Hindi film industry is a major source of entertainment in countries across the globe. According to Richard Corliss of *Time* magazine, "'[T]hroughout the Indian subcontinent, in North Africa, the Middle East, Asia straight through to Indonesia, large parts of Eastern Europe, it's the most popular form of entertainment in the world'" (Sikka, 2005). Corliss went on to say that

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[9] The Hindi film industry is often called Bollywood, a slang term that takes the first letter of the Mumbai's former name, Bombay, and plays on the word, Hollywood.

one can compare Hindi films and the industry to "'Hollywood films of the '30s and '40s, where there was a huge industry disgorging 1,000 movies a year back then, as [the Hindi film industry] does now'" (Sikka, 2005). With such a high number of films produced annually coupled with the fact that Hindi films are so popular around the world, it is not surprising then that "Indian movies have become Top 10 hits in countries where the Indian diaspora has spread" (Sikka, 2005). This is why the study of portrayals of people of Indian origin residing outside India in Hindi films is crucial.

The subsequent chapter attempts a brief survey of the development of the Indian film industry and the contribution that Indian cinema, particularly Hindi films, have made both to indigenous as well as global culture. It will also shed some light on the role of cinema in India as a reflection of socio-political and cultural developments in India and the inevitable gravitation towards the depictions of what the Indian government and Hindi film industry call "NRIs" (Non-Resident Indians)[10].

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[10] The term NRI or Non-Resident Indian is utilized by the Indian government and Indian film industry, particularly the Hindi film industry, to refer to a person of Indian origin that is residing anywhere outside India.

CHAPTER 3: THE RISE AND GROWTH OF CINEMA IN INDIA

In 1896, the birth of cinema stirred India to its depths and the creative Indian mind welcomed it to serve as an innovative experiment (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Within a year of cinema's coming, screenings were held in India in prestigious theater halls, under canopy tents, in parks, and even in sports fields (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The traveling cinema shows, in urban as well as in rural India, were widely held among the masses and led to the imminent popularity of cinema in India (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). India's prolific film industry can be roughly divided into seven general periods: the silent film era; the talkies: a new era; the post-independence scenario; modernism, escapism and the dichotomy and blending of the East and West; the boom and the divide: commercial films and art films[11]; and finally, the Hindi film industry and the emergence of "the NRI[12]."

The Silent Film Era (1912-1934): the Dawn of the Indian Film Industry

The first Indian to realize the potential of the medium of cinema was Dhundhiraj Phalke (1870-1944), popularly known as Dadasaheb Phalke and referred to as the Father of Indian Cinema (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Phalke, whose interest in film started in 1910 when he attended a screening of the film, *The Life of Christ* (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994), was the pioneer who converted Indian cinema into a purely indigenous industry, an Indian cinema "made by and for Indians" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 5). The potential of the moving image opened a new vista before Phalke, and he

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[11] Art films are also known as the New Indian Cinema (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).
[12] The term NRI or Non-Resident Indian is utilized by the Indian government and Indian film industry, particularly the Hindi film industry, to refer to a person of Indian origin that is residing anywhere outside India.

became determined to use this medium to "tell" familiar stories in a way that would educate the masses and improve the plight of his people (Thoraval, 2005). Phalke visited London to learn the techniques of filmmaking and buy equipment (Thoraval, 2005).

The first Indian feature film produced by Phalke was *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This film was very well-received by the Indian masses and created the first new genre: mythological films (Thoraval, 2005). This genre was replete with deep religiosity and the visual form was so intense that at times audiences were moved to perform prayers and rituals in the theater halls themselves (Thoraval, 2005). Phalke used the Indian folk theater style known as *nataka* in his next film *Bhasmasur Mohini* (*The Legend of Bhasmasur*, 1913), the first Indian film to star women (Thoraval, 2005). With the hope of inspiring his fellow countrymen to produce more films of their own, Phalke released his short film, *How Films Are Prepared* (1917), a brief documentary on the techniques of filmmaking (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). During his career, Phalke made more than 100 films, ranging from mythological, social, and historical films, to short and documentary films (Thoraval, 2005). Phalke thus played a central role in the development of India's burgeoning national film industry[13].

Alarmed by the popularity of Indian films, the British government tried to circumscribe the Indian film industry with the Empire Films Corporation which was founded to rejuvenate the British film industry by reserving screen time quotas for films

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[13] In commemoration of the services rendered by Phalke, the government of India instituted a national award in 1966 to be given annually to a film personality for a lifetime achievement in cinema (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

produced within the "Empire" (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). In reaction to this British imperialistic organization, a social reform movement grew within the Indian film industry and began to relate these popular middle class stories; this formed a genre that was ripe to be translated cinematically (Garga, 2005; Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). Consequently, this period in Indian cinema's history marked a significant increase in the variety of indigenous Indian film genres, including social, historical, and farcical; action and stunt films had also become quite popular (Thoraval, 2005). One noteworthy social film of the 1920s was *Bhilet Pherat* (*The England-Returned*, 1921) written by Bengali Dhiren Ganguly (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). It was "one of the first social satires of Indian cinema. . . which highlighted those Indians who blindly aped the clothes and habits of the British rulers" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 11). This film was a bold endeavor that highlighted the general resentment of Indian people towards the deliberate attempt at the westernization of Indian society (Thoraval, 2005) and may be the first indigenous Indian film ever to portray Indians who resided abroad and returned to India.

The realism genre began in 1925 with the film *Savkari Pash* (*Indian Shylock*, 1925)[14] (Rajadhyakshya & Willemen, 1994) about the contrast between the simple and good life of the villagers and the cunning and complicated life of city dwellers (Thoraval, 2005). Such films that covered a wide range of themes portraying the realities of the social life of Hindu society, continued to be produced during the 1920s (Thoraval, 1995; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Some of these films "introduced elements from a Westernised lifestyle into the Indian context" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 12) and are noteworthy

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[14] *Savrash Pash* (1925) is a film by well-known filmmaker, Painter (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

as their use of English titles served as a built-in reminder that India was still a British

colony. Nevertheless, as India's *swadeshi* (nationalist) movement was rapidly

burgeoning during this period, films emphasizing freedom of consciousness were

inspiring people, and historical, religious and mythological films depicting the glorious

past of India were becoming very popular (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen,

1994).

Interestingly, the 1930s were significant in that they brought forth two distinctive

sets of films across these genres – one catering to the needs and requirements of the

Western and anglicized socialites – and the other fulfilling the aspirations of the general

Indian masses (Thoraval, 2005). Lavish "Oriental fantasies" or "Mughal romances" were

leading to Indo-European coproductions (Thoraval, 2005), such as *Diler Jigar* (*Gallant

Hearts*, 1931)[15] and R.S. Choudary's *Madhuri*[16] (1932). According to Thoraval:

> These films were regarded by Indian critics as 'exotic' portrayals meant
> for the Western market (a major success from this point of view). The
> Renaissance of German cinema from the 1920s encouraged these
> coproductions, mainly a collaboration between Himansu Rai, the Bengali
> actor and future founder of the legendary Bombay Talkies Studios in
> 1934, and Bavarian director Frantz Osten who worked in India until 1939
> (Thoraval, 2005, p. 14).

In contrast to these "exotic" films, pro-independence themed films were boldly inspiring

the Indian people (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

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[15] *Diler Jigar* (1931) is one of the few silent films still in existence today (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).
[16] *Madhuri* means sweetness and is a woman's name.

In 1930, well-known director V. Shantaram of Kolhapur made his historical film, *Udaykal* (*Thunder of the Hills*, 1930), originally titled *Swarajyacha Toran* (*The Garland of Freedom*), but the film was censored by the British because it used the word 'freedom' (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The film portrayed Maratha emperor Shivaji's struggle against Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, a story that symbolized India's independence struggle against the British (Thoraval, 2005). In this manner, the indigenous Indian film industry was utilizing the medium of film to inspire the people of India to rise against the British and attain independence.

In separate theaters, Hollywood films, which were in vogue since the advent of cinema in India, were screened to cater to the needs of foreign residents and anglicized Indians (Thoraval, 2005), but these films could not gain the kind of popularity among the Indian masses that Indian films made by Indians did (Thoraval, 2005). In fact, a study on this subject was conducted by the Indian Cinematograph Committee (three Indians and three Englishmen) in 1927-28, focused on "the various facets of production and distribution of films" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 18). This nationwide study was a multifaceted probe featuring interviews of people of various professions and socio-economic strata (Thoraval, 2005). "The report concluded that the vast majority of the Indian public preferred Indian films to Hollywood productions" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 18). Thus, it is clear that on the eve of the Talkies Era in India, the Indian people had an obvious preference for reflective images of their cultural values and patriotic aspirations (Thoraval, 2005).

The Talkies: A New Era

By this time, the talkie was introduced, and the Indian film industry was developed enough to adopt this new technology (Thoraval, 2005). Inspired by the first-ever talkie film, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), an Indian theater owner, named Madan, organized the first screening of a talkie in Calcutta around 1930 (Thoraval, 2005). "The impact on India was immense, as it revealed the possibilities offered by sound, opened new horizons for this emerging form of cinema and led to the advent of the first Indian talkie. . . just four years after the first talkie film was made in America" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 20). With the invention of the talkie, film producers in India had a rare opportunity to experiment with the traditional, theatrical style of presenting cinema; Thoraval (2005) observed: "[T]alkies paved the way for [the] future explosion of languages, music, and songs of the Indian people" (p. 18).

Socio-political subject matter was often voiced through films of this period – an impressive display of expression for a colonized people; for example, Ranjit Studio's *Achhut* (1939)[17] was made because of Gandhi's fight against caste discrimination (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). In fact, this film was endorsed by Gandhi before it was even made (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). A notable director of socio-political films was Bimal Roy, who had studied under Nitin Bose at New Theatres (Garga, 2005). "His indignation [arose] out of one man's exploitation of the other, lack of human decency and moral decay… [To him], "exploitation in any form – social, economic, or religious – was unacceptable" (Garga, 2005, p. 51). Roy's political films included the

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[17] *Achhut* means Untouchable. This film was directed by Chandulal Shah and was the next major film after Bombay Talkies' *Achhut Kanya* (1936) to address this topic (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

documentary *Bengal Famine* (1943). The following year, he made his directorial debut

with Bengali film *Udayer Pathey*[18] (1944), the success of which led to its Hindi remake

Hamrahi[19] (1944), which portrayed the conflict between the haves and the have-nots

(Garga, 2005, p. 52). During the title displays in this film, Roy utilized a song by famous

nationalist writer and poet Rabindranath Tagore; this song later became the national

anthem of India (Garga, 2005). "[W]hat distinguished the film was its utter sincerity and

stark realism, traits that [Roy] would hone to perfection in *Do Bigha Zamin*[20] (1953)"

(Garga, 2005, p. 53).

Due to major shortages in raw stock in 1942, only well-known producers were

given a maximum film amount of 11,000 feet for features and 400 feet for publicity

trailers (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994); priority was given only to recognized

producers and films that supported Britain's World War II effort, subsequently causing

an upsurge in war movies[21] (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). For studios, this was a

turbulent time as, "War profiteers increasingly launder[ed] their gains through the film

industry, inflating star salaries and budgets, speeding up the shift away from studios and

towards independent production" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 22).

Post-Independence Scenario

By the crucial year of 1947, the year in which India won her independence from

the British, film production company Bombay Talkies and its successors had thoroughly

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[18] *Udayer Pathey* is the Bengali title for *Humrahi*.
[19] *Hamrahi* means lifelong companion.
[20] Two Acres of Land.
[21] Some examples were *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946) (Children of the Earth), *Neecha Nagar* (1946) (Lowly City), and *Dr. Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* (1946) (the English title of which is *The Journey of Dr. Kotnis*) – all considered war-effort films (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

established the film melodrama as a key form of expression (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The film melodrama had reached new heights as a representation of a nation on the brink of modernization; it also served as a means to express post-war a sense of unity, politically as well as culturally (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). The war for independence effected nationalist policies and ideologies and in 1949 led to the founding of the Films Division, a documentary division of the industry (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). It was at this time that there was an explosion of themes of nationalism and unity based on traditionalist values (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). The immediate years after the struggle for independence continued to be significant and highly productive for the Indian film industry (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

In 1948, the illustrious Bimal Roy made *Anjangarh*[22] (1948), a Bengali/Hindi film that served as "a political allegory about collusion in colonial times between aristocracy and a rising indigenous bourgeoisie" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 309). The sequel to his *Udayer Pathey/Hamrahi* (1944), this film, produced by film company New Theatres, was based on Subhodh Ghosh's story *Fossil* about a kingdom that also allegorically represented the socio-economic changes arising in India (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Another metaphorical film was the Hindi film *Kalpana*[23] (1948) which was a surreal fantasy shot at Gemini Studios; "this ode to creative imagination mobilize[d] the vocabulary of traditional dancing, which double[d] as a metaphor for the dreams invested in the newly independent India" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p.

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[22] Strange House.
[23] *Kalpana* means imagination.

311)[24]. It influenced the artistic style of Raj Kapoor's famous film *Awara*[25] (1951) and

its dances had an impact on future film *Chandralekha*[26] (1948) (Rajadhyaksha &

Willemen, 1994). In fact, for several years, *Kalpana* was regarded as an example of "a

successful fusion of Indian modernism and the cinema" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen,

1994, p. 311). This film was also shown in the United States as a 122' version and was

appreciated abroad (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Only one year after attaining

independence, films of India were quickly gaining world recognition (Rajadhyaksha &

Willemen, 1994).

Some Indian films were not only blending together modernism with

traditionalism, they were also displaying fusion between cinematic styles of the East and

the West (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). An example of such a film was the

aforementioned *Chandralekha* (1948). Also made at the Gemini Studios, S.S. Vasan's

Chandralekha (1948) was "the first Madras production to become an all-India hit"

(Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 22). Several of the dance sequences in this film

were perceived as continuations of the dances in *Kalpana* (1948) (Rajadhyaksha &

Willemen, 1994). One of India's most recognized films, *Chandralekha* was a period

adventure film that succeeded on many counts. According to Rajadhyaksha & Willemen:

> Although the genre itself was not new to the Tamil cinema, its aggressive
> redefinition of entertainment mobilized Hollywood-style orientalism for
> an indigenist mass culture and became a landmark in the codification of an
> Indian mass entertainment ideology after Independence (Rajadhyaksha &
> Willemen, 1994, p. 310).

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[24] *Kalpana*'s use of chiaroscuro effects and semi-expressionist angles made it visually unique
(Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).
[25] Vagabond.
[26] A woman's name.

Chandralekha (1948) also reflected diversity with its musical score which included: "Carnatic, Hindustani, Bharatnayam, Latin American and Portuguese folk music as well as a Strauss waltz" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 310). The musical score alone served to embody the diversity of cultures that have resulted from foreign settlers and colonization (Mathur, 1974).

"Influenced both by trends in world cinema and the situation in the country, it is hardly surprising then that [the 1950s] presided over the birth of the Indian Film Noir" (Raheja & Kothari, 2004, p. 49). An example of such a film was *Baazi*[27] (1951), Guru Dutt's debut film, which showed "the new type of anti-hero … who in many ways symbolized the fast-growing urban working class – angry, amoral, ambitious" (Garga, 2005, p. 68). *Aar Paar*[28] (1954) is another example of a film in this category (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This film used the Western method of "interposing incidental characters into the narrative choreography as the street urchins energetically dance[d] in the streets of Bombay" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 334). *Pyaasa* (*Eternal Thirst*/*The Thirsty One*, 1957) was a hit melodrama inspired by *Srikant*, a novel by Saratchandra Chatterjee, and was "the first in a series addressing the state of the nation and the displaced romantic artist" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 352). In this artistic feat, the main character sang a song, which protested "the existence of such exploitation in a newly independent India" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 352).

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[27] *Baazi* means bet.
[28] *Aar Paar* means this or that.

A significant film addressing independent India's cultural and socio-political state was *Andaaz*[29] (1949), a melodrama showing that "the new, independent India should value capitalist modernization while retaining feudal family and moral values" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 312). This film established the stardom of iconic actor Dilip Kumar, who starred in several films spanning some 50 years, and actor-producer-director Raj Kapoor (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994):

> Like his contemporary Raj Kapoor, [Dilip Kumar's] filmic identity offered a complex cultural/psychological terrain displaying the anxieties of Independence and the nostalgias of a pre-Partition childhood. Unlike Kapoor, Dilip Kumar's naturalist underplaying often presented him as an innocent loner caught in and destroyed by conflicting social pressures (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 312).

This film utilizes the heroine Neena, played by icon Nargis Dutt, to symbolize newly independent India; the utilization of the Indian female as a symbol of a country's cultural state is a pattern that continues in Hindi films. In *Andaaz*, Neena's fate served as a metaphor for the potential consequences for India if she forgets her history and cultural roots.

The development of the Indian film industry naturally was affected by India's post-independence interaction with other countries of the world and this resulted in the amalgamation of different ideas and cultural perspectives moving in the direction of international culture and subsequent globalization (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The interaction that independent India had with socialist countries as well as with countries of the West had a peculiar impact on the variety of films produced by the film

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[29] *Andaaz* means style or approach.

industry of India (Raheja & Kothari, 2004). As this overview has shown thus far, post-independent films may be classified under five categories: indigenous theme-based films, socialist-influenced films, occidental-influenced films, and two types of socio-economic films: one type showing economic deprivation and the other showing the economic development effected by the five-year plans of Nehru (Thoraval, 2005; Raheja & Kothari, 2004; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Indigenous theme-based films were films that perpetuated the continuity of the grandeur of India's past; these types of films included historicals and mythologicals as well as melodrama and social films that specifically dealt with culturally indigenous issues and conflicts (Thoraval, 2005; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). With socialist ideas emanating from abroad, especially from the Soviet Union, socialist-influenced themes depicting the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were common (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Occidental-influenced films were produced (and are still being produced) as the initial interaction of India with the free world was intense and the effects discernible (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

Modernism, Escapism, and the Dichotomy and Blending of the East and West

As mentioned in chapter two, there was a noticeable surge in the 1960s to shoot films in foreign countries; this led to dynamic increases in films' productions budgets (Raheja & Kothari, 2004). *Sangam*[30] (1964), a lavish romantic melodrama with popular songs, started the trend of shooting scenes abroad (Raheja & Kothari, 2004; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). *Sangam* was shot in Switzerland, *Love In Tokyo*

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[30] *Sangam* means union.

(1966) and *Aman*[31] (1967) were shot in Japan, and *Aankhen*[32] (1968) was shot in both Japan and Hong Kong (Raheja & Kothari, 2004; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Some other films shot abroad were *Around the World* (1967), *Jewel Thief* (1967), and *An Evening in Paris* (1968). The majority of these films was chiefly escapist, which accounted for the craze in India to shoot films abroad as well as to produce "light, romantic comedies" in an ultra-western style (Raheja & Kothari, 2004, p. 72). It is important to note that the mood of the Indian public had dramatically changed as an effect of the two wars that India had to fight against China and Pakistan respectively (Raheja & Kothari, 2004). Consequently, the Indian public wanted light, fantastic films to relax (Raheja & Kothari, 2004). Also worth noting is the wave of English-titled films that coincided with the wave of emigration of Indians in the sixties; this fact, along with the craze to film in foreign countries, reveals how the Hindi film industry continued to be a reflection of its socio-political and cultural state as shaped by its own citizens and interactions with the rest of the world.

At the other end of the spectrum were films that focused on female protagonists' strife, sacrifice, and suffering (Raheja & Kothari, 2004). Such an example was Guru Dutt's *Sahib Biwi Aur Ghulam*[33] (1962). Sometimes compared to Satyjit Ray's *Jalsaghar*[34] (1958), *Sahib Biwi Aur Ghulam* (1962) was a commentary on feudalism and the aristocratic society and also focused on a righteous woman (played by film icon Meena Kumari) who bore with all sorts of sacrifices in order to win her husband

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[31] *Aman* means peace.
[32] *Aankhen* means eyes.
[33] *Sahib, Biwi, Aur Ghulam* means Master, Wife, and Servant.
[34] *Jalsaghar* means The Music Room.

(Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Also in such films, female film icon Nutan had "developed a naturalism … constituting an indigenized variant of neo-realism. This aspect of her acting … became crucial to … the iconography of the New Indian Cinema's [art films'] notion of 'Indianness'" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 166). As with many Hindi films of the early years of India's independence, the Indian heroine again is utilized as a vehicle to embody a cultural ideal – in this case, true "Indianness."

Other notable films of this period covered the economic conditions, and social deprivations[35]. One such noteworthy film incorporating these themes was *Shaher Aur Sapna*[36] (1963), which told the story of a poor man from Punjab migrating to the city in search of a job (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This President's Gold Medal Award winner was a significant film as it set a specific trend for the next 10 years on the depiction of class rivalries and factionalism (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). *Shaher Aur Sapna* (1963) perhaps also served as a warning against migration and the threat of dreams of fantastic materialism gone unfulfilled.

The Boom and the Divide: Commercial Films and Art Films (New Indian Cinema)

A significant "boom" in the Indian film industry started in the mid-1960s and continued through the 1970s (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). In 1970, India produced 433 feature films, rendering it the largest film producer in the world; this number jumped to 714 in 1979 (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). In 1970, the popular monthly magazine *Stardust* was launched and is still in circulation today (Rajadhyaksha

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[35] Examples of such films were *Chaudvin ka Chand* (1960), *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* (1960), and *Shaher Aur Sapna* (1963) (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 2008).
[36] City and Dream.

and Willemen, 1994). Using 'Bombay English', it featured gossip about film stars and is

said to have "revolutionize[d] the concept of the fanzine" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen,

1994, p. 26). It was also following the significant increases in Indian film production and

related film media that the Indian government's new agreement with the Motion Picture

Export Association of American (MPEAA[37]), allowing for U.S. films, including the films

of Hollywood, to be imported into India again[38] (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

It was during the 1970s that Indian films dramatically split with respect to theme

(Raheja & Kothari, 2004). In commercial films, there was an influx of sex and violence;

simultaneously, the art film movement gathered momentum (Raheja & Kothari, 2004).

Art films, or films of the New Indian Cinema, were free from the formulaic stories of

mainstream cinema (Raheja & Kothari, 2004). They were not polluted with overacting

and exaggeration and were a challenge to the gross commercialization of cinema

(Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Art films of this period focused on suppressed sects

of society and shared a similar ethos with films of the silent era and early talkies[39]

(Raheja & Kothari, 2004; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Art films addressed many

kinds of issues, particularly those associated with the depressed classes and women

(Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The New Indian Cinema Movement continued well

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[37] MPEAA stand for Motion Picture Export Association of America.
[38] Political unrest in India led to the declaration of the Internal Emergency. "The negative of Amrit
Nahata's *Kissa Kursi Ka* (1977) (Story of Power), a satire on Emergency rule [was] destroyed by Sanjay
Gandhi's representatives" (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994, p. 27). In 1978, state governments
collected an average of 43% of the gross box office (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).
[39] A notable film of this period, *Junoon* (1978) was set in 1857; it told a story about a Pathan who fell in
love with an Anglo-Indian woman, protected her during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and was later killed
while she was sent to Britain (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

into the early 80s with several films[40], such as *Arth*[41] (1982), a film about the marital infidelity of a filmmaker, who leaves his wife for a movie star (Smita Patil) (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). While this film focused primarily on Bombay's upper-class sect, the plight of the housekeeper (whose husband also left her) presented an issue that cut across class hierarchy and depicted the hardships of women with unfaithful husbands (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

An interesting remake to note was *Bhilet Pherat* (1972). It "rework[ed] the theme of one of the first Bengali films" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 412) by Dhiren Ganguly and told three stories about three young men who have returned from England and are forced to grapple with their idealism (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). As Thoraval mentioned about the 1921 original, it "highlighted those Indians who blindly aped the clothes and habits of the British rulers" (2005, p. 11). Once again, a social film addressing Indians returning to India after living abroad surfaced but only momentarily; this was a Bengali, not Hindi, film. The Hindi film industry's growth was able to reach a wider audience. A Hindi film that did tell the story of an Indian family residing outside India was the very well-known *Purab Aur Paschim* (1970), the title of which means "East and West." In this film, an Indian visits England and meets a wealthy and "modern" family, the members of which have forgotten their roots and reminds everyone of their traditional Indian culture and values.

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[40] Such films included *Ek Baar Phir* (1980), *Akrosh* (1980), and *Saransh* (1984) (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).
[41] *Arth* means substance.

It was during this period, the 1970s, that the Hindi film industry introduced quite possibly the most recognized name in world cinema: Amitabh Bachchan[42]. This time-tested hero has starred in numerous films from the 1970s to the present day (Rajadhyksha & Willemen, 1994) and with endorsement contracts with at least 17 brands ranging "from Parker Pens to Pepsi;" his face can be found "on billboards and TV screens from Jakarta to Johannesburg" (*TIME*, 2005). Referred to by CNN (2007) as "the De Niro" of the Hindi film industry, this former radio announcer, stage actor (and cargo company executive) became famous during the 1970s as the 'angry young man', starting with the film *Zanjeer*[43] (1973). "Bachchan's image reorganized the formulaic melodrama around the clash between the laws of kinship and the laws of the state, requiring the hero to become an outlaw governed by a higher code of conduct" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 49). Time magazine elaborates on the significance of Bachchan's role as the angry young man: "To millions of cinemagoers catching a brief respite from their hardscrabble lives, he was the Indian rebel with a cause" (*TIME*, 2005). An influential icon of the film industry, Amitabh Bachchan[44] has won several awards, including Indian government civilian honors: the Padma Shri (1983) and the Padma Bushan (2005) (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). In 1999, he was named BBC's Superstar of the

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[42] Amitabh Bachchan's first role was in Abbas's *Saath Hindustani* (1969). In addition to acting, Bachchan has done voice-overs in Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* (1969), Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* (1977), blockbuster film *Lagaan* (Tax) (2001), and the remake of *Parineeta* (2005). Also, he occasionally has sung songs in some of his films (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). Although he lost some popularity in the late 80s, Bachchan made a comeback with film *Hum* (1991) in which he played an older character (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).
[43] Chain.
[44] One of his most memorable films was *Sholay* (1975) which "ran for six years in Bombay on its release in 1975" (*TIME*, 2005) and featured several iconic film stars of this period.

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Millennium and has won fourteen Filmfare Awards, the most recent of which he won in 2006 for Best Actor in the film *Black* (2005) (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

Along with Amitabh Bachchan, Indian films were also earning recognition around the world. For example, English-language film *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) "achieve[d] a commercially viable, English-speaking audience, enhanced by foreign sales" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, 27). *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) was directed by Aparna Sen and produced by actor Shashi Kapoor, brother of Raj Kapoor (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). In 1983, it was nominated for a BAFTA award in the Best Actress category and won the Evening Standard British Film Award (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Also receiving recognition was the world renowned film *Gandhi* (1982). In 1983, Bhanu Athiaya became the first Indian to win an Academy Award when he received an Oscar for Best Costume Design for the film *Gandhi* (1982) and (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Directed by Britisher Richard Attenborough, *Gandhi* starred actors from the British, Hindi, and Hollywood film industries (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The life story of Mahatma Gandhi was meticulously portrayed and was unprecedented in style and presentation (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). The film won eight Oscars and several other awards (and had garnered 16 nominations) as it was a film that moved people in countries all over the world (imdb.com). In 1992, accomplished filmmaker Satyajit Ray was bestowed with both an honorary Oscar and India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). In 1996, Shyam Benegal's *Making of the Mahatma* was released both in India and South

Africa (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This film depicted the life of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa and was highly applauded (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

Iconic American settings and symbols were also making their way into Hindi film productions. For example, at the beginning of the film, *Tezaab*[45] (1988), Mohini (Madhuri Dixit) performed the extremely popular song *Ek do teen*[46] in a rock concert setting that, shot in a studio, was modeled after New York's Times Square (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). A year later, blockbuster film *Maine Pyar Kiya*[47] (1989) also utilized American iconography (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This film was a "very successful rich-boy/poor-girl romance" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 490) and told the love story between the son of a business man and the daughter of a village mechanic. Its songs were extremely popular as was the film, which was dubbed into several Indian languages (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

> The film's novelty [was] due mainly to its adoption of advertising imagery: rich, saturated colour effects constantly emphasizing surface, trendy costumes …, green fields full of footballs, mountainsides of red apples, neon signs, ice falling into glasses of Coke, a heroine with fluffy toys and a leather-jacketed hero who loves motor-bikes, [and] posters of American pop icons (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 490).

Like *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989), the film *Dil* (1990)[48] also employed an advertising visual style, particularly "for the soundtrack and the editing, [with] several sequences winding up with a direct address to the audience" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 496).

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[45] *Tezaab* means Acid.
[46] *Ek do teen* means one, two, three.
[47] *Maine Pyar Kiya* means I have loved.
[48] The film, *Dil* (Heart) (1990) was an enormous hit, starring Aamir Khan and Madhuri Dixit and also explored a romance of a young couple whose families do not approve of the relationship, but eventually

Even in the 1990s, the diversity of themes remained a priority of the Hindi film industry. In 1994, the film entitled *1942 – A Love Story* was released; the story was set in the backdrop of the Quit India Movement during World War II (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This film was praised for its camerawork reminiscent of the New Indian Cinema style and contributed to "the major 90s revival of 'nationalist' themes, recalling the values of the Independence struggle…, even enjoining the audience to stand up for the national anthem which close[d] the performance" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 523). Another notable film of the 1990s was English-language film *English, August* (1994), which was based on Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). This film was declared "an ode to multiculturalism, presented as a generational problem. The original novel, of the same title, was one of the better-received items of the post-Rushdie boom in Anglo-Indian fiction" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 518).

1994 was also significant year for contemporary Hollywood films which made their screening debuts in India (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). *Jurassic Park* (1992) was dubbed in Hindi (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Next followed *Speed* (1993), *Cliffhanger* (1992), *Aladdin* (1992), *True Lies* (1994), and *Twister* (1996) (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Hence the trend of dubbing Hollywood films into Hindi and other Indian languages became a regular practice (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994).

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resolve their issues at the end of the film (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). Another successful teenage love story was *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar* (He Who Wins Is King) (1992) which starred Aamir Khan and depicted the sports rivalry between the rich Rajput College and the middle-class Modern School and the juxtaposition of the haves with the have-nots (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

During this period, a major and influential trend resurfaced and captivated audiences. In 1994, the old genre showing Indian family life was revived with blockbuster film *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun…!*[49] (1994), "the biggest hit in the history of Indian cinema" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994**,** p. 29). Starring Salman Khan and Madhuri Dixit, this blockbuster film was comprised mostly of scenes of an elaborate North Indian wedding. This film was actually a remake of the lesser known film *Nadiya Ke Paar*[50] (1982) and "proved to be an astonishing success as [did] the effectiveness of its marketing as a 'clean' family film" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 519).

The Hindi Film Industry and the Emergence of "the NRI"

The end of the Cold War, the almost extinct non-alignment policy of India, and the economic development of India, as well as the subsequent liberalization and steps towards globalization have strengthened India and America's relationship and have had a significant impact on the Indian film industry (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). One consequence has been the (initially slow) movement towards an increase in Indian film depictions of "NRIs" (Non-Resident Indians)[51] or Indians residing outside India. From *Bhilet Pherat* (1921) and its remake in 1971 to *Evening in Paris* (1967), and *Purab Aur Paschim* (1970), the interest in depicting Indians returning from abroad has been a latent and sometimes blatant one. In light of globalization and the fact that people of Indian origin live and work around the world, the Hindi film industry with its hundreds of films produced each year, was induced to depict the lifestyle of Indians residing abroad. While

[49] Who Am I to You?
[50] Across the River.
[51] The term NRI or Non-Resident Indian is utilized by the Indian government and Indian film industry, particularly the Hindi film industry, to refer to any person of Indian origin that is residing anywhere outside India.

the general formula of mainstream Hindi films has not changed, new political identities, communities, and settings have been introduced.

In 1995, Aditya Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*[52] (1995), featuring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol, became a blockbuster and perhaps the first commercial success that somewhat favorably depicted "NRIs" or Indians residing outside India. *Dilwale Dulhani Le Jayenge* (1995), the next top-grossing film after *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun…!* (1994) (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994), kicked off a string of films depicting Indians residing outside India. In this film, Singh, an "NRI" residing in England for the last 20 years, had hopes to marry his daughter, Simran (Kajol) to his best friend's son in India. Before going to India, however, Simran toured Europe with her girlfriends and meets and falls in love with Raj (Shah Rukh Khan). This news caused Singh to immediately relocate his family to India where Raj later showed up to promise Simran that he will marry her but only after winning the approval of her father. Film historians Rajadhyaksha and Willemen observed: "A remarkable feature of the film is the … unproblematic subsumption of feudal patriarchy into 'postmodern' globalisation and the selling of 'authentic' identity as something that can only be achieved via consumerism" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 528). They also remarked:

> As with [*Hum Aapke Hain Kaun…!*], this film also allows for a limited space within the terms of a feudal patriarchy where young people may aspire to a kind of watered-down version of modern subjectivity, represented in consumerist terms, before 'returning to the fold'. An alternative reading of the film could see it as chronicling the hero's passage from British-Asian diaspora into

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[52] He Who Has (a Brave) Heart Takes the Bride.

traditional Indian patriarchy, with the love-story … simply sugar-
coating the prescription (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994, p. 528).

This last interpretation, which Rajadhyaksha and Willemen deem "alternative," is insightful but all too brief. It is the hope of this researcher that such "alternative" readings are brought to the forefront as significant and worthy of deeper consideration.

Summary

As demonstrated in this historical overview, the Indian film industry was once an inspiring and mobilizing force of nationalism and socio-economic problems and solutions as demonstrated in the films of the silent era, the first talkies, and post-independence films. As Phalke, the Father of Indian cinema, envisioned (before India had even attained independence), he achieved his dream of establishing a purely indigenous industry, an Indian cinema "made by and for Indians" (Thoraval, 2005, p. 5); he utilized this medium to "tell" familiar stories in order to educate the masses. As the production of Indian films gained momentum and western films were also shown in halls, there was a split with some films fulfilling the aspirations of the masses and other films directed towards entertaining Western and anglicized audiences which soon led to Indo-European coproductions. Despite these lavish films, pro-independence films continued to inspire Indians to oust the British (Thoraval, 2005).

With the advent of the Talkie, various languages, music, and songs added another dimension to the medium of film which, through sound, was able to "transmit" a range of subcultures in India. With sound technology, socio-political films were able to educate and inspire even more people as not everyone could read the texts of the silent films

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(Thoraval, 2005). Once India achieved independence in 1947, the post-war and post-nationalist films began to tackle concepts of culture, traditional Indian values, and ideas and ideals of "Indianness." It was around this time that the melodrama was established by film production company Bombay Talkies as the fundamental form of expression (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994).

Some post-independence films portrayed the blending of modernism and traditionalism and the fusion of the cinematic styles of the East and West (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Films that depicted modernism versus traditionalism themes were common during the 1960s and still are to this day. In the 1970s, the boom in the Hindi film industry offered a plethora of films, and the split between commercial films and art films provided even more variety regarding subject matter and cinematic style (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). As this survey has shown, films portraying themes on Eastern versus Western cultures and modern versus traditional values have surfaced throughout India's film history, but it is the Hindi film industry's depictions of "the NRI," that is, of Indians residing outside India, that are communicating culture to audiences. Such images transmit representations of culture to audiences through the entertainment medium of film. An analysis of attempts to portray the Indian emigrants and the intermingling of the East and West in Hindi films will be discussed in later chapters as will their connection to Indian-American films. The following chapter will delineate the theoretical framework utilized in the interpretation of the results and analyses of this study.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study of representation in Hindi, Hollywood, and Indian-American films has roots in Harold D. Lasswell's 1948 functions of communication. These functions were surveillance, correlation, and transmission of culture (Lasswell, 1948). Sociologist Charles R. Wright later adapted these functions, renamed them "activities of communication," and added entertainment as the fourth activity (Wright, 1959). These last two activities of communication in particular, transmission of culture and entertainment, serve as the foundation of the theoretical framework for this study. Wright's later definition of the transmission of culture included the "transmission of social heritage" and focuses "on the assimilation of people into society" (Wright, 1986, p. 5). Describing the transmission of social heritage as an activity "concern[ed] with communication relevant to the assimilation of children and adults into various social roles, immigrants into a new (new to them, that is) society, and related matters" (p. 5), Wright categorized this activity as education or "socialization" (Wright, 1986). As the transmission of culture transpires through entertainment, and film is a form and medium of entertainment, this fourth activity of communication was also included as part of this study's theoretical framework. Wright defined entertainment as "communication activities primarily (even if arbitrarily) considered as amusement, irrespective of any other features they may seem to have" (Wright, 1986, p. 6). By incorporating entertainment as one of the four activities of communication, Wright acknowledged a previously neglected avenue through which culture is transmitted.

Within the broad framework of the transmission of culture and entertainment, there is opportunity to transmit images representing the cultures of non-dominant groups in mainstream media and educate (Wright, 1986). Regarding representation of members of non-dominant cultures in mainstream media, there is, consequently, the possibility for stereotyping to take place. The term stereotyping was coined in 1922 by Walter Lippmann, who explained stereotyping as a way to categorize, an act in which (according to psychologists and sociologists) everyone participates in order to make sense of and save time in a disorganized and busy world (Lippmann, 1922). "In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 25). Lippmann expanded his analysis of stereotyping by drawing a link between cultural transmission and members of different generations: "To be sure a stereotype may be […] consistently and authoritatively transmitted in each generation from parent to child" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 30). It is when these stereotypes are tinted by the values and beliefs of a person that the stereotypes can take on implications (Lippmann, 1922; Ramirez Berg, 2002). According to Ramirez Berg:

> [W]e are all, potentially at least, in a position to take the next step and imbue those categories with value-laden – that is, positive or negative – connotations. This sort of negative generalizing is in fact what we usually mean when we think of stereotyping – not simply value-neutral category-making (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 14).

Ramirez Berg explained that there are two factors that when added to "plain category-making" (p. 14) form "bad" stereotypes: ethnocentrism and prejudice (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Ethnocentrism is the view that one's own particular group is the center and the standard by which one assesses others outside of the group (Ramirez Berg, 2002). "Adhering to the circular logic of stereotyping, the out-group ("Them") is compared to the standard defined by the in-group ("Us"). By this measure, and not surprisingly, "They" are always incomplete and imperfect" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 14). In terms of the Us-Them demarcation, Ramirez Berg defined prejudice as: "judging Others," out-group members excluded or singled out due to difference, "as infinitely inferior based on ethnocentrically determined difference. Prejudice holds that They are *inherently* not as good […] as We are because They are different from Us" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 15)[53]. Finally, Ramirez Berg defined the term stereotype in terms of Us and Them as "*a negative generalization used by an in-group* (Us) *about an out-group* (Them)" (p. 15) and pointed out that Lippmann referred to these "mental constructs" (p.15) as "pictures in our heads" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 1).

Not only are such "pictures," or stereotypes, transmitted from one person to the next, one generation to the next (Lippmann, 1922; Lasswell, 1948), they are also transmitted through the entertainment and visual medium of film (Wright, 1986). There are several ways that a stereotype can be formed on-screen (Ramirez Berg, 2002); these are called cues, many of which are visual (Scott, 1994 from Tankard & Severin, 1997),

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[53] For some, Ramirez Berg's Us-Them concept is similar to Said's concept of Orientalism in which the West considers itself to be superior to the East (Said, 1994).

such as clothing, makeup, and set design (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Together such cues form

a stereotypical trope; in other words, these cues together form an image that in its totality

is called a stereotype (Ramirez Berg, 2002). If this form of "undue categorization"

(Severin & Tankard, 1997) slips into a repetitive pattern in the form of visual

representation, it can "transmit" a negative image and misrepresent the image of a group

that has recently formed a new cultural identity. In this manner, the transmission of

culture, which Lasswell and Wright defined as education, can lead to the stereotyping of

members of the non-dominant culture and could contribute to effects on society

according to cultivation theory (Severin & Tankard, 1997). As emphasized in previous

chapters, the medium of film, it may be said, is an intrinsic part of Indian culture, if not

the core of the visual culture of India (*TIME*, 2005; Thoraval, 2005; Raheja & Kothari,

2004; Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1994). Film constitutes a central part of the American

visual culture as well. The theory of visual rhetoric, therefore, was significant and

valuable to the theoretical framework and design of this study. As the literature review

will show, many studies have employed similar frameworks, particularly that of

stereotyping (generalizing of out-group members by in-group members) and Othering

(rendering out-group members as "different" or inferior in order to "normalize" the main

characters, in-group members, and demonstrate their superiority over out-group

members) (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

    "Beyond their existence as mental constructs or film image, stereotypes are part

of a social conversation that reveals the mainstream's attitudes about Others" (Ramirez

Berg, 2002, p. 4). Because this study examined the representation of non-dominant

groups in the mainstream media of two dominant cultures (India and America), ideologies of race and hegemony were of central importance as was the feminist perspective. "[W]omen exist in cultural production as "the other," or "the eternal feminine," the necessary complement to the male"" (Gaines, 1984, p. 23). This may be the case for women of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films and Indian-American films, and for female Indian emigrants and first and second-generation Indian Americans in Hindi films. The transmission of culture (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1986) was a critical component of this study because of what was being examined: representation of non-dominant groups, possible stereotyping of non-dominant groups, and self-representation. These representations will be analyzed "as part of a larger discourse on Otherness" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 4).

Literature Review

Although this researcher has yet to find any academic work that specifically focuses on the representation of Indian Americans in film, several studies have been conducted on the subject of stereotyping, Othering, and exclusion of various ethnic groups in newspapers, primetime television news, advertising, soap operas, sitcoms, and film. The abundance of such studies shows that the acts of stereotyping, Othering, and exclusion, particularly of people of racial and ethnic minority status, while not a new phenomenon, are prevalent and therefore examined across a variety of academic disciplines, ranging from Journalism to Psychology to Cultural Studies, and many others. Some stereotypes have begun to diminish; for example, in a study of American mass media, results showed a marked decrease in the intensity of negative stereotypes of

Russians and Eastern Europeans and attributed this diminution to the mass media (Ibroscheva, 2002). Other studies show, however, that stereotyping, Othering and marginalization of other minority groups in the mass media, news and entertainment, are still widespread.

News Media

Since at least the early 1900s, stereotyping of minority groups has been prevalent in American news media, both print and visual. In a study of magazines dating from 1917 to 1930, a textual analysis examined the prejudiced and racially stereotypical language used by white critics to explain the musical art form of jazz (Anderson, 2004). In her analysis, Anderson found that through 1960 and onwards "writers use[d] the topic of jazz music in order to express a dislike of African Americans" (Anderson, 2004, p. 144) and how a teacher even discussed jazz and the negative effects it supposedly had on white students' learning capabilities (Anderson, 2004). The study also found instances of critics attempting to frame jazz by African-American musicians in particular as "savage" and "evil " (Anderson, 2004). Anderson also compared the verbal stereotypical portrayals of African-American jazz musicians in an article written in 1917 with the visual racist depiction of Gus from the film *Birth of a Nation* (1914) (Anderson, 2004), thus demonstrating the link between the entertainment medium of film and images perpetuated by the news.

Thirty years after the aforementioned racist article was published, the 1947 Commission on Freedom of the Press delineated five features that a society may demand from its press, including: "A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's

events which gives them meaning" (Commission of the Press, 1947, p. 21); it not only emphasized the separation of fact from opinion but also specified, "The projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society" (1947, p. 26). It further elaborated that: "[p]eople make decisions in large part in terms of favorable or unfavorable images. They relate fact and opinion to stereotypes" (p. 26). The Report also acknowledged that media such as magazines and newspapers as well as entertainment media, such as comic strips and film, "are principal agents in creating and perpetuating these conventional conceptions. When the images they portray fail to present the social groups truly, they tend to pervert judgment" (1947, p. 26). Over 20 years later, the Kerner Commission Report reproached the news media for its general lack of racial integration and its failure to cover stories on race relations (*Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1968). Despite the efforts of these reports, however, stereotyping and underrepresentation continue to occur in mass media, including news media as observed in the following review by Poindexter (2008).

In an extensive review of over 35 years of published communications literature, Poindexter (2008) revealed in a comprehensive taxonomy of over 40 studies spanning from 1975 to 2008 that broadcast and print news have stereotyped ethnic minority groups, or people of color. Included in this review were 18 different types of representation, ranging from Cultural Relics/Exotic to Entertainers (Poindexter, 2008). Ethnic minority groups were also stereotyped as Outsiders, Emotional, Gang Members, and Model Minority, stereotypes under which Asian Americans were classified (Poindexter, 2008). Poindexter also looked at how racial and ethnic groups were branded

with degrading labels and how Asian Americans were "historically excluded" and found as underrepresented as: everyday people participating in everyday activities, educational, entrepreneurial, and community achievers, and victims of race-related problems (Poindexter, 2008). This study also found that Asian Americans were underrepresented as recognized authority, private citizen sources, and other categories (Poindexter, 2008). Overall, African Americans. Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans were all "historically excluded" and "branded with degrading labels" (Poindexter, 2008). They were also inconsequentially included, as specifically demonstrated in a quantitative study of visual images of these groups in broadcast news (Poindexter et al, 2003).

According to a content analysis, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans "were virtually invisible as anchors, reporters, and subjects in the news" (Poindexter et al, 2003, p. 254). This study also found segregation in story assignments even though African Americans reported and anchored the news (Poindexter et al, 2003). In terms of news sources, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans were "rarely" interviewed (Poindexter et al, 2003). Framing has been defined as an immensely powerful way of outlining – or framing – an event or issue or debate; it can easily lead to stereotyping if only one side is shown, for example (Severin & Tankard, 1997). In fact, according to Poindexter et al, "research on news coverage of people of color has found evidence of excluding and stereotyping African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, as well as segregating minority expert and official sources" (2003, p. 527). According to the results of this study, there were no Native American or Asian American reporters (Poindexter et al, 2003). One of the reasons this study is significant

is because the local television news source is the primary news source of most Americans (Poindexter et al, 2003). Based on this study, people of certain racial and ethnic groups are not being shown as delivering the local news, interviewed as news sources, and possibly are not being viewed as newsworthy. This study is also important because of its contribution to the sparse literature on Asian Americans and media.

Advertising

According to Paek and Shah (2003) in their study of stereotyping in U.S. magazine advertisements, the model minority myth reinforces "the stereotypical notion that minorities other than Asian Americans are dull and lazy […] Such inter-minority comparisons constitute a hostile discourse – used primarily by White policymakers – [that could] exacerbate social conflicts among minority groups" (Paek & Shah, 2003, p. 239). This study also said that a large number of Asian-American families are poor. The poverty rate was cited as almost three times that of Whites (Paek & Shah, 2003). It also stated that statistical evidence indicating that Asian Americans have a high economic status was somewhat misleading as the socio-economic status varies so much from subcategory to subcategory within the Asian-American group (Paek & Shah, 2003).

Utilizing content as well as textual analysis, this study asked: "[H]ow have Asian Americans been represented and stereotyped in advertising? In what ways can Asian American stereotyping shape the public's view of minorities? And how can the stereotyping of Asian Americans be interpreted in terms of ideology and power?" (Paek & Shah, 2003, p. 228). In terms of the settings of the advertisements, 50% of the Asian-American models were shown in the workplace as compared to 30% and 33% for African

Americans and Latinos respectively (Paek & Shah, 2003). These two minorities were given relatively minor roles in the advertisements whereas African American and Latino females were hardly shown (Paek & Shah, 2003). According to this study, Asian-American women were shown just as often as the men, but "regardless… the image of petite and exotic beauty remains a common visual theme" (Paek & Shah, 2003, p. 236). This study also found that South Asians are less visible in these ads while those also included in the Asian-American category, such as Afghanis, Bangladeshis, Indonesians, Malaysians, Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans were not shown (Paek & Shah, 2003). "The relative invisibility of South Asian Americans may reflect the conflicted status of the group even within the Asian American studies movement" (Paek & Shah, 2003).[54]

Stereotypes of Asian Americans identified in this study were: the workaholic; the technologically skilled; the academically excellent; the successfully assimilated (but not without a price, meaning non-threatening). These model minority images are harmful in many ways. According to this study, these stereotypes can limit career opportunities. "The image of Asian Americans' success through quiet achievement often excludes them in workplace promotions" (Paek & Shah, 2003, p.238). One of the first Indian-American films, *ABCD* (1999), replicates this exact occurrence with the Indian protagonist in the film.[55] Another way the model minority stereotype can pose a problem for Asian Americans is that this image may lead to exploitation; Asian-American workers may be viewed as disposable because they are passive (Paek & Shah, 2003). Another myth is

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[54] This study is one of the few this researcher has found that uses the terms South Asians, East Asians, and Southeast Asians to breakdown the all-encompassing term "Asian." These terms are only used in one paragraph, however, and then the authors revert to using "Asian."
[55] The Indian-American protagonist's best friend who is white and not nearly as productive gets the promotion instead.

that Asian Americans are kept from leisurely pursuits because of their tremendous drives towards success (Paek & Shah, 2003). According to Paek and Shah, the danger of "uncritical acceptance frequently leads to a general social amnesia regarding racial issues or an exacerbation of tensions among minority groups" (Paek & Shah, 2003, p. 239).

Entertainment Media: Television and Film

Recalling concerns of Paek and Shah with respect to stereotyping and cultivation theory, a study on Native Americans in mass media found evidence "that white viewers' perceptions of the socio-economic status of some racial groups (e.g. African Americans) are affected by what they see on television" (Tan et al, 1997, p. 270). This study outlined the various stereotypes of Native Americans and tests hypotheses to determine how personal contact and/or "vicarious contact via television" influence(s) stereotyping of Native Americans (Tan et al, 1997, p. 265). Like Asians and other racial and ethnic groups, Native Americans have also been stereotyped though advertising as well as through television and film (Tan et al, 1997). As with Asians, the cultural diversity of Native Americans has also been ignored (Tan et al, 1997). Although little is known about how stereotypes of Native Americans formed, television and film have utilized and perpetuated these portrayals (Tan et al, 1997).[56]

Clearly, stereotypes of ethnic minority groups have been prevalent in American entertainment media since at least the early 1900s as demonstrated by the 1914 motion picture *Birth of a Nation* and its racist depictions of African-American men (Anderson, 2004). In an analysis of John Stahl's 1934 film *Imitation of Life*, the researcher textually

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[56] Interesting to note is the terminology this study uses to refer to this ethnic group: Native Americans, Indians, American Indians – all of these terms are used interchangeably as are their adjectival forms.

analyzed the stereotypical depictions of African-American female characters in the melodrama using feminist film theory as well as black female spectatorship (Thaggert, 1998). Pointing out the similarity between character Delilah and the mythical Aunt Jemima (Thaggert, 1998), that is, the mammy stereotype, Thaggert (following hooks) suggested to womanists to "look back like Peola, at the screen images and commodities of Aunt Jemima, but not recognize ourselves there" (Thaggert, p. 490). Recounting hooks, Thaggert quoted, "It was better then, that we were absent, for when we were there, it was humiliating, strange, sad" (hooks qtd. by Thaggert, p. 487). Stereotypes do embody those characteristics in terms of images as does the experience of watching onscreen the group with which one identifies being stereotyped.

It was not until 1989 that the first African-American woman, Debbie Morgan, won a Daytime Drama Emmy for Best Actress in her role as Dr. Angie Baxter Hubbard on *All My Children* (Larson, 1994). According to Larson, this was in a genre "that relegated blacks to walk-on status until the mid-1960s and non-feature roles until the 1970s" (Larson, 1994, p. 44), but Larson went on to say that while this was indeed a significant advancement for African-American women, the character of Angie Baxter Hubbard did fall into the stereotype of the matriarch. Larson also said that some female African-American characters fell into the stereotype of sexual promiscuity (Larson, 1994), and the stereotype of "black women as dominant and nurturing, driving away or emasculating black men with their aggressive behavior… that their "manless" status was related to their own strength – being financially, emotionally, and morally superior to their men" (Larson, 1994, p. 46). Consequently, African-American children on the show

did not have "strong father figures" (Larson, 1994, p. 47). Eventually, *All My Children* broke with these stereotypes a few years later by introducing racially conscious characters and issues (Larson, 1994).

Other minority groups have also been stereotypically represented in *All My Children*. For example, Larson observed, "Comic relief is sought through the exaggerated images of an overweight Italian housewife in Queens and an overweight, overbearing Mexican maid speaking broken English" (Larson, 1994, p. 48). According to this study, the only Asian on the show was the character of An Lee, also a stereotypical depiction: "docile, submissive, and sexless" (Iiyama & Kitano qtd. by Larson, 1994, p. 48). Not only was her name constantly mispronounced by her employer, her overall nature was switched to fill a different stereotype: "exotic, sexy, diabolical" (Iiyama & Kitano qtd. by Larson, 1994, p. 48). And lastly, the stereotypical character of An Lee was written off the show when she received an academic scholarship to attend the University of California (Larson, 1994). As many scholars have pointed out, stereotyping the marginal group allows for the comfortable positioning of the dominant group to define itself as normal (Collins qtd. by Thaggert, 1998) and superior (Ramirez Berg, 2002; Vann & Caputi, 1990)

Pham's analysis of *Rush Hour* (1998) delineates a few of the technical ways Jackie Chan's character, Lee, is "othered;" similarly, Indians have been Othered in a few Hollywood films. For example, Lee, is Othered by not playing an Asian American (Pham, 2004); in the same manner, Hollywood others Indians or Indian Americans by not allowing the actor to play an Indian-American character. Most often such a character

does not even exist; rather, the actor must just be an Indian or, in most Hollywood films, just brown. Hand-in-hand with Asian Otherness goes the accent (Pham, 2004) while another way Lee is at first Othered but then befriended is through authentic Chinese food (Pham, 2004).

Salman Rushdie's review of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2001) proclaimed the film "a breakthrough for multicultural discourse in Hollywood" (Pham, 2004, p. 127). While this may or may not have been true, it is only natural to wonder the same thing about the effects of the mainstream release of *Monsoon Wedding* (2002), *Bend It Like Beckham* (2003), and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) in particular (only because it adheres to the formula of the Hindi film genre). With films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2001), *Rush Hour 2* (2001), *Kiss of the Dragon* (2001), and *Bulletproof Monk* (2003), it would seem that East Asian actors and filmmakers are carving a niche for themselves in Hollywood, but a deeper look shows they are "finally being admitted into Hollywood – under very specific conditions and for very specific roles" (Pham, 2004, p. 122). Scholars also point out that just because East Asian films gain mainstream success in America, this does not mean that East Asian-American films get similar recognition (Kai cited by Pham, 2004, p. 122). Similarly, though *Monsoon Wedding* (2002) did well in America and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2003) earned blockbuster status worldwide, this does not mean that Indian-American films have enjoyed mainstream recognition as well.

"[T]here has been little Asian American scholarship to date that investigates the Asian invasion or its impact on Asian American representational politics" (Pham, 2004, p. 122). While this fact is a cause of concern, more disturbing is the possibility that when

scholars are referring to Asian-American scholarship, Indians may not always necessarily be included in that broad ethnic category – an important point to consider as one notes the widespread use of the term Asian American throughout the literature reviewed thus far. While scholarly works such as *Racism, Sexism, and the Media: The rise of class communication in multicultural America* (Wilson, Gutierrez & Chao, 2003) have added material on Asian cultures, it must be noted that "Asian Indians" were only mentioned in passing on its lists of ethnic groups. This is another reason why a study of depictions of Indians and Indian Americans in Hollywood films specifically is needed.

Although there are few depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films, there are no studies of the stereotypical representations of Indians in Hollywood films as far as this researcher is aware. Countless studies have been conducted on Hindi films; yet, generally, these studies have mentioned the "Non-Resident Indian (NRI)[57]" in Indian films in just a superficial and ephemeral manner. Unfortunately, only fleetingly has there been any scholarly analysis conducted on these films' treatment of Indian emigrants. The only one found thus far recognized that the "NRI" has been "something of an obsession in Bollywood" (Nayar, 2003, p. 78), but shrugged this off as occurring simply because of the perpetuated [and stereotypical] millionaire lifestyles of the NRI (Nayar, 2003). Nayar went on to say, "To be sure, this speaks to a sentiment on the part of the viewer that material wealth and success can always be found abroad, but the hazards of the Western [meaning *White*[58]] world can also lead to a despicable corruption

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[57] The term NRI or Non-Resident Indian is utilized by the Indian government and the Indian film industry, particularly the Hindi film industry, to refer to any person of Indian origin that is residing anywhere outside India.
[58] This is Nayar's terminology.

of Indian values – not to mention of Indians, both home and abroad" (Nayar, 2003, p. 278). According to Nayar, the Indian residing outside India, or NRI, is basically brought into these narratives in order to fulfill *dharma*, one's sacred duty; the sacred duty then, if one is an "NRI," is to return to India, to one's roots, one's values and traditions (Nayar, 2003). Though no studies conducted on Indian Americans and film were found, a few psychological and sociological studies on people of Indian ethnicity in America may be used during the analyses of Hindi and Indian-American films.

This present study is an attempt at contextualizing the significance of film as the primary visual medium of choice for Indian-American self-representation within the framework of the transmission of culture and entertainment. It will examine the depictions of Indians residing outside India in Hindi films and people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films. The Hindi film industry has offered an often insular and limited glimpse of Indian emigrants and second-generation Indian Americans while Hollywood has hardly acknowledged Indians' existence; therefore, within the framework of the two functions of communication: the transmission of culture and entertainment, this study will use the theories of stereotyping, Othering, marginalization, as well as visual rhetoric and the feminist perspective, to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America?

RQ1a: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with depictions of Hollywood depictions of Indians in America socio-economically?

RQ1b: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in terms of culture and identity?

RQ2: How do Hindi and Hollywood films depict second-generation Indian Americans?

RQ3: How are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film?

RQ4: In terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films?

RQ5: How are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?

The following chapter will delineate the quantitative and qualitative methodologies utilized in the design of the study to examine representations of people of Indian origin residing outside India (Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans) in Hindi films, representations of people of Indian ethnicity (Indians in America) in Hollywood films, as well as self-representation in Indian-American films.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

In order to answer this study's research questions regarding the transmission of culture through the entertainment medium of film (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1986), the design of this research investigation entailed a multifaceted methodological approach. Through the process of what researchers call triangulation (Potter, 1996; Mason, 1996; Pauly, 1991), a researcher can combine two or more research methodologies, or strategies (Lindlof, 1995) in an effort to compensate for the weaknesses of the other research method. Research methodologies are combined to try and produce a fuller, more complete picture of the study at hand (Potter, 1996). Through the practice of triangulation, this study utilized the methodologies of content analysis as well as textual analysis to examine three types of films: Hindi films, Hollywood films, and Indian-American films. In addition, newspaper articles about the films explored in this study were researched to help inform the textual analysis.

For this study of Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India, Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in America, and self-representation in Indian-American films, the researcher primarily utilized the quantitative method of content analysis for Hindi and Hollywood films and the qualitative method of textual analysis for Indian-American films.

Quantitative Analysis

In order to paint a more comprehensive picture of representations of Indians residing outside India (people of Indian origin – this includes Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans) in Hindi films and representations of Indians in

America (people of Indian ethnicity) in Hollywood films, content analysis was utilized to study a variety of variables. The content analysis identified instances of representation in Hollywood films released during the years 1984 to 2005 and in Hindi films released during the years 1995 to 2005, and the textual analysis provided an in-depth study of 10 Indian-American films and explored their contexts of self-representation.

Sample of Hindi and Hollywood Films. A purposive sample was used for Hindi and Hollywood films. Hindi films selected for this study were released during a 10-year period beginning with 1995. This year was chosen as the starting point for this sample because it marked the beginning of the Hindi film industry's trend of depicting characters of Indian origin residing outside India with blockbuster commercial film, *Dilwale Dhulania Le Jayenge* (1995). Additional Hindi films that represented the purposive sample for this study included: *Pardes* (1997), *Kuch Kuch Hotha Hai* (1998), *Kaho Na… Pyaar Hai* (1998), *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (2000), *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (2001), *Lajja* (2001), *Khabhi Khushi Khabhi Gham* (2002), *Mujh Se Dosti Karoge?* (2002), *Om, Jai, Jagdish* (2002), *Swades* (2004), and *Jo Bole So Nihaal* (2005). The Hollywood films which represented the purposive sample began with *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984). This year was chosen as the starting point for the sample because this was the first major commercial success that depicted so many Indian characters. A broader period spanning about 20 years was selected as Indian representation in Hollywood films is sparse. *Short Circuit* (1986), *Office Space* (2000), *National Lampoon's Van Wilder* (2002), *Malibu's Most Wanted* (2003), *Love Don't Cost a Thing* (2003), *Raising Helen* (2004), *The Terminal* (2004), *Harold and Kumar Go to*

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White Castle (2004), *Son of the Mask* (2004), *Spiderman 2* (2004), *A Lot Like Love* (2005).

For both of these types of films, an online search was conducted in an attempt to locate such films but was not very helpful because these specific groups (particularly people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films) are rarely mentioned or highlighted. Consequently, the researcher relied upon a convenient sample of films[59]. Some films were not examined as they did not qualify for this study. M. Night Shyamalan films were not included because although M. Night Shyamalan is a prominent Indian-American director and a person of ethnicity, he fleetingly appears in his own films in a manner similar to Alfred Hitchcock; therefore, his films were not analyzed in this particular study. The Hollywood films included in this study were investigated for the representations of people of Indian ethnicity or characters of Indian ethnicity in speaking roles, supporting actor roles, and lead actor roles, as well as peripheral and non-speaking roles.

Unit of Analysis and Coding Categories. Because the unit of analysis was the character and the context of the scene affects the depiction of the character, the character was interpreted within the context of the scene. To answer RQ1, which asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America?, each character was coded for whether it was stereotyped. Options included: Othered (excluded due to difference(s) from those of the dominant culture or used to make dominant culture characters look/seem "normal") and

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[59] Some films, such as *Salaam Namaste* (2005) and *Neal 'N' Nikki* (2005), were released on DVD or discovered after the study had been conducted and therefore, could not be included in the study.

marginalized (treated as minor; insignificant in relation to dominant culture characters) (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Additional choices were: stereotypical (generalizing of out-group members by in-group members), non-stereotypical, combination, other, and unable to determine. Depictions were also evaluated overall. For this variable, options were good/positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, and bad/negative.

Visual Communication Content

To answer RQ1a, which asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America socio-economically?, the age and sex of the characters were coded. Options for the character's approximate age included: aged (60 years old and older), middle-aged (40 years old up to 60), young adult (20 years old up to 40), adolescent (13 years old up to 19), child (up to 13), and other. For the sex and gender of the character, choices were: male and heterosexual, female and heterosexual, male and unknown, female and unknown, male and homosexual, female and homosexual, and other.

Other visual communication content variables that conveyed the socio-economic status of a character were: occupation and economic class. Choices for the occupation of a character covered a broad range of options and included: doctor, lawyer, engineer/scientist, technocrat, as well as accountant, business tycoon, small business owner/manager, cabdriver, hotel/motel owner/manager, and student. Other options were housewife/stay-at-home mother and retired. To ensure the list of choices was exhaustive (McCombs & Poindexter, 2000), unemployed, employed but unknown, unable to determine if employed/unemployed, and other were also included. For economic class,

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choices included wealthy, upper class, middle class, lower class, and poor, as well as other and unable to determine/unknown. Because of the length of Hindi films and their tendency to show fantastic success stories (particularly about Indians who venture abroad), economic class choices also included: from lower/poor class to upper/wealthy class as was its opposite, from upper/wealthy class to lower/poor class. The choice, from lower/poor class to upper/wealthy class, was meant for a character that was initially of a lower or poor class and later in the film became wealthy or of the upper class; the choice, from upper/wealthy class to lower/poor class, was meant for a character that was initially of the upper class or wealthy and later became poor or of the lower class.

Additional variables examined in this study were: country of residence, U.S. citizenship/residence status. The variable, country of residence, was also useful in answering RQ1. Choices were: in film's dominant country, in film's non-dominant country, and other. The reason that this variable was important was because where the character ultimately resided revealed to a certain extent how "accepted" it was for the person of Indian origin residing outside India (in a Hindi film) to continue residing in a country other than India (a country other than that of the dominant culture of the film). This variable also revealed how "accepted" it was for the person of Indian ethnicity (in a Hollywood film) to continue residing in America (the country of the dominant culture of the film) or outside India (the country of the non-dominant culture of the film). This variable was also significant as it is linked to the idea and existence of a growing cultural group, comprised of second-generation Indian Americans, and the concept of the continued development of Indian-American culture. Regarding U.S.

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citizenship/residence status, each character was coded for the type of Indian character it was; an example is a person of Indian origin (PIO) with residency abroad (that is, an Indian emigrant in a Hindi film). Other options were second-generation Indian American, British Indian, unable to determine, and other.

Additional variables coded were size of home, type of transportation, and luxuries requested. One of the most obvious visual symbols of economic status in both Hindi and Hollywood films is the size of the character's home. Choices included very large, large, average, modest/small, very small, other, and unable to determine; this last choice was particularly relevant as previous studies have shown that Asians in general are depicted more often in the workplace in America media (Paek and Shah, 2003) than in the personal domestic sphere. Another symbol of economic status in both Hindi and Hollywood films is the type of transportation a character uses. Choices included expensive car, motorcycle, helicopter, jet, airplane, scooter, and rickshaw (found in Hindi films). Other options included regular car, old/beaten car, bus, bicycle, and on foot, as well as other and unknown.

The variable, luxuries and amenities requested, was included for characters depicted in both Hindi and Hollywood films, but particularly for characters in Hindi films because of the types of conveniences that Indians who are visiting India in Hindi films are sometimes portrayed as requesting. Such amenities included a change in staying/living quarters, car/limousine, exercise equipment/gym, swimming pool, and excessive jewelry and served as visual cues of class. Other amenities coded were cellphone and laptop. Additional accoutrements included were cigarettes/cigar/or light

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for either of these, alcohol, bottled water, and other. Also coded were requests for particular/special foods and particular/special drinks as even these details can serve as signs that transmit culture and convey cultural status.

RQ1b asked: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and identity? One of the visual communication content variables included skin tone. For skin tone, options were very fair, fair, medium, dark, very dark, other, and unable to determine. Additional visual communication content variables coded were: type of clothing worn, fitting of clothing, type of cultural attire, and overall appropriateness of cultural attire. For the type of clothing, examples included formal wear, semiformal wear, business/work attire, business casual, sportswear, swimsuit, sleepwear, and other. Such codes helped gauge the visual image that is in part portrayed by the ensembles a character wears and answer the research questions posed by this study. For cultural attire, choices included traditional Indian, contemporary Indian, mixed Indian and western/fusion, western, and other, and for the overall level of appropriateness of attire, choices were: appropriate, somewhat appropriate, somewhat inappropriate, inappropriate, and other.

Additional visual communication content variables that were examined in this study to answer RQ1b were attire accessories, jewelry, and make-up, and lighting. Options for accessories included signifiers such as glasses, turban, *bindi/tikka*, sunglasses, cap/hat, other, and none. Such signs serve as visual details that transmit information to help establish the image of a character. Additional signs that serve to

transmit culture were jewelry and make-up (for females). For these variables, similar

choices as those provided for cultural attire included: traditional Indian, modern Indian,

mixed Indian and western, western, other, and none. The lighting of a character was also

examined (in comparison to the lighting of dominant characters) since lighting sometimes

serves as a technical aspect that conveys a character's goodness or badness (Ramirez

Berg, 2002). Options for lighting were: brighter, darker, same, other, and unable to

determine.

<p align="center">*Verbal/Aural Communication Content*</p>

To answer RQ1b: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India

compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and

identity?, verbal communication variables such as the character's accent, slang, and

idiomatic expressions were coded. These three variables were afforded choices

including: in accordance with the film's dominant language, not in accordance with the

film's dominant language, other, unable to determine, and not applicable/unknown. If a

character's accent was not in accordance with a film's dominant language, this variable

possibly functioned as a cue, or a sign, that served to Other that character. Such was also

the case for a character's slang and idiomatic expressions; if these variables were coded

as not in accordance with a film's dominant language, each variable possibly functioned

as a cue, or a sign, that Othered that character and aided in the formation of the

character's image. The primary language of the character was also coded as one of the

following choices: Hindi, English, Punjabi, Gujarati, mixed, or other. These four

variables, accent, slang, idiomatic expressions, and language, helped assess how Indians

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residing outside India (people of Indian origin – Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans) are depicted in Hindi films and how Indians in America (people of Indian ethnicity) are depicted in Hollywood films in term of cultural and identity specifically. The study of the verbal communication variables helped answer RQ1b within the theoretical framework of the transmission of culture, entertainment, and stereotyping (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1986; Ramirez Berg, 2002).

To answer RQ1b: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and identity?, the variables, name and background music of each character, were analyzed as aural cues can also serve as signs that transmit culture. The name of a character conveys cultural identity. Options for this variable were: Indian, western, Indian name that has been shortened/changed to a western name, other, and unknown. Choices for background music included: of India, of the west, fusion, other, unable to determine, and none. Recording whether the name of the character was Indian, Western, or Indian then shortened to a western name helped show how Indians residing outside India are portrayed in Hindi films and how Indians in America are portrayed in Hollywood films.

Social, psychological, and attitudinal visual cues that helped answer RQ1b: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and identity? were a character's values and types of excesses. The options for values were similar to those of the verbal communication variables accent, slang, and idiomatic expressions: in accordance with the film's dominant culture, not in accordance with the film's dominant culture, mixed, other,

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and unable to determine/unknown. The types of excesses in which a character in a film engages helps shape and convey the temperament and disposition and sometimes even the cultural makeup of that character. The types of excesses that were coded in this study included: social/parties, sexual, material/purchasing, leisure, cursing, other, and unknown.

The type of company a character keeps also helps paint the picture of a film character's image; this is why circle of friends/type of company was coded with the following choices: cultured/sophisticated, modest/unassuming, uncouth/ruffian, other, and unknown. One of the variables included was the family interaction of a character; this was examined particularly for the characters analyzed in Hindi films as it is rare for any of these characters not to have any kind of interaction with family members, and a character's interaction with family is revealing of his cultural status. Choices included very tolerant of family, somewhat tolerant of family, somewhat intolerant of family, very intolerant of family, indifferent, other, and unable to determine; this last option was for characters analyzed in Hollywood films in particular as people of Indian ethnicity generally are not allotted roles that are as intricate as the roles designated to the dominant (White) characters. An additional variable examined (and inspired by Hindi films) was the parents of a character. This variable examined the presence (or absence) of a character's parents. Options included mother and father, father, mother, orphaned, adopted, other, and unknown. The reason this was considered important is because the mother figure in Hindi (and Indian-American films) is considered symbolic of Indian culture, "bearer of meaning" (Gledhill, 1984) – in this case, bearer of cultural meaning.

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The examination of this variable in Hindi films in particular was useful because this variable served as a sign that helped establish the image of the Indian residing outside India culturally.

When assessing the cultural status of a character, the overall disposition, attitude towards the film's dominant culture, general familiarity with culture, as well as the overall degree of cultural assimilation are also telling; they are signs that serve as transmissions of culture (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1986) and variables that helped answer RQ1b: How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and identity? The overall disposition of a character is also revealing when evaluating cultural depictions of characters in film, particularly in Hindi films; this is why options included were warm/kind, indifferent, cold/rude, transformed from negative to positive, other, unable to determine/unknown. The options for attitude towards the film's dominant culture were favorable, not favorable, indifferent, other, and unable to determine/unknown. Also helpful in answering RQ1b was the variable, general familiarity with film's dominant culture, which was coded as high, medium, low, other, or unable to determine/unknown. Options for the variable of the overall degree of cultural assimilation of the character included: westernized, Indian at heart, culturally balanced/bicultural, transformed Indian, other, unknown/unable to determine. Additional categories included: comical/buffoon, superficial/vain, and ditsy/flighty. Other categories were: status conscious (materialistic, bragging, flaunting) and sycophantic/obsequious while additional categories included culturally inept/culturally lacking and socially inept (nerdy, awkward, gauche.)

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To answer RQ2, which asked, how are second-generation Indian Americans depicted in Hindi and Hollywood films?, the U.S. citizenship/residences status and cultural status of Indian character born outside India were analyzed. Options included person of Indian origin residing outside India, second-generation Indian American, British Indian, other, and unable to determine. The degree of cultural assimilation of the Indian character born outside India was also coded using the following choices: assimilated into dominant culture, assimilated into non-dominant culture, bicultural, and other. The examination of this variable will, in part, direct one's attention toward the question of the significance of Indian-American films.

Films were coded for type of film: Hindi or Hollywood, year in which they were released, and amount of screen time for characters.

Coders. For this study, there were two coders: one Indian woman and the researcher. Because one of the coders was born and raised in India, has lived in the United States for over 25 years, and resides six months in India and six months in the United States, her extensive knowledge of both the Indian and American cultures qualified her as a coder for this study. Because of the researcher's bicultural background as a second-generation Indian-American, she also qualified as a coder. Both of the coders' fluency in Hindi and English also contributed to their qualifications as coders.

Codebook Development, Coder Training, Inter-coder Reliability and Analysis. The content analysis codebook stemmed from the general research question about representations in Hindi and Hollywood films and how they compare. The variables in the codebook were designed to answer the sub-research questions regarding

socio-economic and cultural status. The variables were also to be applicable to representations in both Hindi and Hollywood films. The first version of the codebook was tested by the researcher and was revised based on applicability to characters in both types of films. The codebook was further revised upon the realization that the economic status of some characters could change; to solve this dilemma, additional options were added. Due to the extensive number of close-ups for Hindi film characters, the codebook was also revised to only include close-ups of Hollywood film characters. The realization that a character may alter his eye color with contacts prompted the addition of contacts as an option. Finally, additional space was added for notes about scenes and dialogues. During the training sessions, discussions about variables allowed for a more comprehensive codebook which was finalized and led to a satisfactory level of agreement, or inter-coder reliability. The revisions of the codebook improved the inter-coder reliability from 80% to 92%[60], exceeding the minimum acceptable level of agreement of 80% (Poindexter & McCombs, 2000). To determine whether relationships between variables were significant, SPSS was used to analyze the data.

Qualitative Analysis

In this study of representation, the theoretical framework, comprised of the transmission of culture through the entertainment medium of film, stereotyping, and visual culture, and coupled with this study's research questions about Indian-American films, warrants the qualitative methodology of textual analysis. Textual analysis is a qualitative method in which the media, in this case film, is analyzed as a text. Textual

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[60] See Holsti (1969, p. 140) for inter-coder reliability formula used.

analysis is utilized to study texts, sometimes in their entirety and sometimes just a portion of the text (Potter, 1996; McCombs & Poindexter, 2000); either way, this methodology involves the study of these texts within their contexts. Its roots which stem from literary criticism (Kellner, 1995) render this methodology particularly appropriate for the analysis of films because, like literature, films tell stories and transmit culture.

Unlike content analysis, the method of textual analysis focuses on meaning and can analyze a text's discourse, narrative structure or style, symbolism, and images (Kellner, 1995). According to Ramirez Berg, "The study of representation in the media must be more than simple content analysis" (2002, p. 4). Textual analysis provides context for the content; it contextualizes the manifest content and analyzes the latent content. This method is often linked with semiotics, "a system for analyzing the creation of meaning not only in written languages but also in other, nonverbal languagelike codes, such as the visual and auditory languages of film and TV" (Kellner, 1995, p. 10). It is the study of any type of element that is used to communicate (Seiter, 1987). The study of culture in Indian-American films will answer RQ3, which asks, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film?

The concept of media as a text (Potter, 1996; Kellner, 1995) is an appealing and practical one in that texts are read. We "watch" television (Mirzoeff, 2003). We "see" movies. We read images. Since images are read and "looked at," it is important to take into consideration the act of stereotyping in representation, particularly through visual representation, in the entertainment medium of film. In his extensive study of Latino

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images in film, Ramirez Berg employed semiotic analysis to examine stereotypes of Latinos and further delineated "stereotypical devices" (2002, p. 42) such as set decoration, mise-en-scene, costuming and scripting, all used to complete the image of the stereotype (Ramirez Berg, 2002) and all examined in the Indian-American films of this study. Other "poetics of stereotyping" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 42) that were analyzed in this study were: attire, background music, jewelry, and make-up.

According to Kellner, "[L]iterary-critical textual analysis has been enhanced by methods derived from semiotics […] Semiotics analyzes how linguistic and nonlinguistic cultural "signs" form widely understood systems of meanings" (1995, p. 10). In semiotics, the unit of meaning is the sign (Seiter, 1987); Saussure theoretically conceptualizes the sign as composed of two parts: the signifier, the element in its material form, and the signified, the concept that the sign represents (Seiter, 1987). There exist two parts in determination of meaning: denotation and connotation (Barthes, 1964); to denote is to show, whereas to connote is to suggest or imply (Barthes, 1964), and it is through connotation that ideological meanings are conveyed in film (Barthes, 1964). Semiotic scholars, Saussure and Pierce argue that "all signs are cultural constructs that have taken on meaning through repeated, learned, collective use" (Seiter, 1987, p. 34). This assertion is significant because the key concept in this study is representation, and a negative form of representation is that of stereotyping, which is perpetuated "through repeated, learned, collective use" (p. 34). As mentioned previously, the theoretical framework for this analysis relies on stereotyping through visual rhetoric and the transmission of culture through the entertainment medium of film. As Barthes explained,

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in film, ideological meanings are conveyed through connotation; therefore for the purposes of this study, ideological textual analysis was employed. According to Kellner (1995), when textual analysis is combined with one or multiple perspectives, such as those espoused in this study – critical cultural, multicultural, and feminist – ideological textual analysis is formed.

Ideological textual analysis, as shaped by these perspectives, helped further analyze the representations of Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans in Hindi films and people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films. Ideological textual analysis also helped answer RQ4: In terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? To answer RQ5: How are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?, these films were analyzed from a critical cultural as well as a multicultural perspective. "Multiculturalism affirms the worth of different types of culture and cultural groups, claiming… [that] oppressed and marginal voices have their own validity and importance" (Kellner, 1995, p. 8). This ideological textual analysis aided in the in-depth examination of self-representation in Indian-American films.

According to Newton, "Much of today's global society… still permits the oppression of women, of people of color, and other nondominant groups through a hegemonic and often brutally intrusive visual system" (2001, p. 147). While Newton is specifically referring to photojournalism, this statement, as demonstrated in the literature,

also holds true for many forms of communication, from the visual and aural in film to print news. Because "thought itself is visual [and] even words have roots in images" (Newton, 2001, p. 117), it is fitting that news articles about the films analyzed in this study were also relied upon in this study. References to media artifacts in the news media (Kellner, 1995) served to add to this new area of study; this is why the following news sources were examined: aczoom.com, idelbrain.com, imdb.com, planetbollywood.com, rediff.com, upperstall.com, americandesimovie.com, asianamericanfilm.com, americanchai.com, wtpy.com. Written news sources provided additional context for the analysis of these films and helped shed some light on the cultural positioning of these films by the press. Additional news sources consulted included *The **Indian Express**, **News India Times**, **Reel World**, **St. Louis Today**, **Eye Weekly***, and *India **West***. Newspaper reviews about these films were collected through research using the internet, libraries, and archives. Such news sources helped the researcher delve deeper into questions about representation, lack of representation, and self-representation, and mainstream and marginal cultures.

Because this researcher has not found any comprehensive study on the subject of self-representation in Indian-American films, all known and available Indian-American films were textually analyzed.

Indian-American Films. An Indian-American film is a film written, produced, and/or directed by an Indian American; it often relates to the socio-economic and/or cultural issues of Indian Americans. For this study, Indian-American films included those that employed a cast of which the majority was comprised of people of Indian

origin, particularly members who were allocated lead and supporting roles in the films.

Based on the criteria, 10 Indian-American films were selected for analysis beginning with

the first Indian-American films, *ABCD* (1999) and *Chutney Popcorn* (1999). Additional

films included: *American Desi* (2001), *Wings of Hope* (2001), *American Chai* (2002),

Indian Fish In American Waters (2003), *Green Card Fever* (2003), *Where's the Party,*

Yaar? (2003) (also known as *Dude, Where's the Party?*), *Flavors* (2004), and *Ball and*

Chain (2004) (also referred to as *Arrangement*). These cultural texts were analyzed as

transmissions of culture within their social and historical contexts (Ramirez Berg, 2002)

as well and as through available news sources such as AsiaSource and National Asian

American Telecommunications Association (NAATA).

Summary of Research Design and Sample of Films

For the purposes of this study, content analysis and textual analysis

complemented each other because content analysis helped answer questions about

manifest content and textual analysis helped answer questions about the meanings

produced by this content. The portion of the study that explored depictions (and/or lack

of depictions) of people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films benefited greatly from the

combination of these two methodologies. With this combination, the researcher studied

not only what was there but also what was not there and then further investigated the

question: why; this combination thus helped answer RQ3, which asked, how are Indian-

American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment

medium of Indian-American film?, RQ4: In terms of transmitting Indian-American

images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood

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films?, and RQ5: How are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?

The following chapter reveals the quantitative analysis results of Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin residing outside India and Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in America. Subsequent chapters reveal the qualitative analyses of Indian-American immigrant films and second-generation Indian-American films.

CHAPTER 6: CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

A total of 74 characters in 24 films were analyzed to understand how Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compared with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America. Included in the sample were characters in Hindi films released between 1995 and 2005 and characters in Hollywood films released between 1984 and 2005. In Hindi films, 23% of Indian characters residing outside India were lead roles while in Hollywood films, 5% of characters of Indian ethnicity were lead roles. Although the difference was not statistically significant, Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing abroad to be background roles (67% vs. 53%). Two percent of Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India were background and non-speaking roles compared to 10% of Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America. Over one-fourth (26%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were shown on-screen for more than half of the film while only 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were shown on-screen for more than half of the time. Furthermore, Hollywood film characters were twice as likely as Hindi film characters to be on-screen 5% of screen time or less (62% vs. 30%).

Depictions of Characters: Stereotyping to Evaluation

RQ1 asked a broad comparative question about representation in Hindi and Hollywood films (How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America?) while the sub-questions asked about details regarding the representations. These representations were analyzed for stereotyping, Othering, and marginalization and were also evaluated as positive,

neutral, or negative. Overall, two-thirds (66%) of Hindi film images of people of Indian

origin residing outside India were stereotyped; 28% were marginalized, 14% were

Othered, and 6% were not stereotyped. In Hollywood films, 57% of characters of Indian

ethnicity were stereotyped, 33% were marginalized, 29% were Othered, and 5% were not

stereotyped. Hollywood films represented people of Indian ethnicity more positively

than Hindi films represented Indians abroad. Forty-three percent of Hollywood film

depictions compared to 32% of Hindi film depictions were positive or somewhat positive.

Hindi film representations were almost twice as likely as Hollywood film representations

to be negative or somewhat negative (44% vs. 24%) (see Table 1).

Table 1   *Overall Evaluation of Depictions of Hindi Film Characters of Indians*
Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian
Ethnicity in America

	Type of Film Character	
Evaluation of Characters	Hindi Film Characters of Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity %
Good / Positive	21	5
	} 32%	} 43%
Somewhat Positive	11	38
Neutral	25	33
Somewhat Negative	21	14
	} 44%	} 24%
Bad / Negative	23	10
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .37; p < .05

Socio-Economic and Cultural Depictions In Hindi and Hollywood Films

The sub-questions of RQ1 examined the representations in socio-economic and cultural detail. To answer RQ1a (How do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America socio-economically?), the following socio-economic variables were examined: age, sex of character, occupation, economic class, country of residence of character, and U.S. citizenship/residence status.

Age of Character. According to Table 2, there were more young adult characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films than there were young adult characters of Indian origin in Hindi films (71% vs. 53%). Forty-five percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were middle-aged or older as compared to 19% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity.

Table 2   *Age Comparison of Hindi Film Characters of Indian Origin Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity in America*

	Type of Film Characters	
Approximate Age of Character	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
Middle-aged and Older	45	19
Young Adult	53	71
Adolescent and Younger	2	10
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .28; p < .10

Sex of Character. Characters in both Hindi and Hollywood films were more likely to be male than female. In Hollywood films, 86% of characters of Indian ethnicity were male while in Hindi films, 62% of characters of Indian origin were male (see Table 3).

Table 3   *Sex Comparison of Characters of Indian Origin Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity in America*

	Type of Film Characters	
Sex of Character	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
Male	62	86
Female	38	14
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .23; p < .05

Occupation of Character. Although occupational differences were not statistically significant, in Hindi films, the most represented occupation was housewives/homemakers/stay-at-home mothers. Fifteen percent of Indian characters residing outside India were represented by this occupation. Other occupations represented were business tycoon (9%), technocrat (6%), and engineers/scientists (4%). Unlike in Hindi films, none of the Indians in Hollywood films were depicted as housewives/ homemakers/stay-at-home mothers or business tycoons. The most depicted occupation was technocrat (10%) followed by engineers (5%).   Students were more popular in Hollywood films than in Hindi films. Almost one-quarter (24%) of

Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were depicted as students while 9% of Indians residing outside India were depicted as students in Hindi films. Hollywood films were also more likely than Hindi films to depict Indians with no known occupation (24% vs. 19%).

Economic Class. Economic status not only serves as a way to classify characters of Indian origin in Hindi films and characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films, but it also yields opportunities to convey more information through visual cues, such as size of home and type of transportation. The economic class of two-thirds (67%) of Hollywood film characters was unknown but only 15% of the Hindi film characters were depicted with an unknown economic class. According to Table 4, 70% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were shown as wealthy/upper class compared to 19% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity, who were depicted as wealthy/upper class.

Table 4 *Economic Class Comparison of Hindi Film Characters of Indian Origin Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity in America*

Economic Class of Character	Type of Film Characters	
	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
Wealthy	49	14
	} 70	} 19
Upper class	21	5
Middle class	9	10
Lower class	2	5
From lower/poor class to upper/wealthy class	2	0
From upper/wealthy class to lower/poor class	2	0
Unable to determine / unknown	15	67
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .54; p < .01

Country of Residence of Character. In Hollywood films, approximately 8 out of 10 characters of Indian ethnicity (81%) ultimately resided in America (the country that

represents the dominant culture of the film.) In Hindi films, 7 out of 10 characters of Indian origin (70%) ultimately kept residing outside India, that is, they stayed in the country of the non-dominant culture of the film instead of moving to India. In Hollywood films, 10% of characters of Indian ethnicity ultimately did not reside in America; they resided elsewhere (any country of the non-dominant culture of the film.) Over one-quarter (29%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin ultimately resided in India (the country of the dominant culture of the film.)

  U.S. Citizenship/Residence Status of Character. Of Hindi and Hollywood films that included characters of Indian origin living outside India and/or second-generation Indian Americans, Hindi films portrayed more people of Indian origin living abroad (72%) than Hollywood films portrayed people of Indian ethnicity living in America (57%) (see Table 5). Even so, Hollywood films were four times more likely than Hindi films to include second-generation Indian Americans (24% versus 6%).

Table 5 *U.S. Citizenship/Residence Status of Hindi Film Characters of Indian*
Origin and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity

U.S. Citizenship/Residence Status of Character	Type of Film Characters	
	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
PIO[*] with residency outside India / Person of Indian ethnicity	72	57
Other	17	5
2nd generation Indian American	6	24
Unable to Determine	6	14
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .33; p < .05

Other socio-economic components of depictions included size of home, type of transportation, and luxuries and amenities requested.

Size of Home. According to Table 6, 42% of the homes of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were shown as very large as compared to 10% of the homes of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. It is important to note, however, that the size of 90% of the homes of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity could not be determined because they were not shown. Thirty-eight percent of the homes of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were not shown.

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[*] Person/People of Indian Origin (PIO)

Table 6   *Size of Home Comparison of Hindi Film Characters of Indian Origin*
Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian
Ethnicity in America

Size of Home of Character	Type of Film Characters	
	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
Very large	42	10
Large	15	0
Average	6	0
Unable to Determine	38	90
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .47; p < .05

Type of Transportation. Thirty-seven percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were shown with expensive cars compared to 10% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. Twenty-nine percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were shown using airplanes as compared to 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were shown traveling on foot seven times more often than Hindi film characters of Indian origin.

Luxuries and Amenities Requested. In Hindi films, 60% of characters of Indian origin were shown as requesting different living quarters compared to Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity of which 10% were shown requesting different living quarters. Over one-third (36%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin from abroad

were shown using or owning a fancy car compared to one-tenth (10%) of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. Six percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were depicted with excessive jewelry compared to none of the Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. In Hindi films, 11% of Hindi film characters were depicted using or requesting exercise equipment compared to none of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. Regarding technological amenities, 23% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing abroad were depicted with a cellular phone compared to only 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America; eleven percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were depicted with a laptop compared to only 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. In Hindi films, 11% of characters of Indian origin were depicted with cigarettes compared to none of the Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. One out of four Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India (25%) were depicted with alcohol compared to one out of twenty Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America (5%). In Hindi films, 6% of characters of Indian origin from outside India were depicted with or requesting bottled water compared to none of the Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America.

Addressing Transmission of Culture and Identity In Hindi and Hollywood Films

To answer RQ1b, which asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and identity?, visual and aural cues that transmit culture and identity were examined. Visual cues included: skin tone, type of clothing, fitting of clothing, type of

cultural attire, the level of appropriateness of the character's cultural attire, attire

accessories, jewelry, make-up, and lighting.

Visual Cues Depicting Culture and Identity

Skin Tone of Character. The analysis found that an overwhelming 79% of

Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were shown with very fair or

fair skin as compared to 10% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in

America. Eighty-one percent of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity had

medium-toned complexions while 19% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin had

medium skin tones. Also notable is that only 2% of Hindi film characters of Indian

origin had dark skin compared to 10% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity

(see Table 7).

Table 7   *Skin Tone Comparison of Hindi Film Characters of Indian Origin Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity in America*

| | Type of Film Characters | |
Skin Tone of Character	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
Very Fair	9	0
	} 79	} 10
Fair	70	10
Medium	19	81
Dark	2	10
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .64; $p < .05$

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Clothing Including Various Dimensions Ranging from Type to Fitting to Cultural

Clothing. In Hindi films, 60% of characters of Indian origin residing outside India were shown wearing casual attire while in Hollywood films, 33% of characters of Indian ethnicity in America were shown dressed casually. Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin to wear business attire (33% vs. 19%). Regarding the fitting of clothing, in both Hollywood and Hindi films, form-fitting clothes were the norm. Hollywood film characters were more likely than Hindi film characters to be shown wearing form-fitting clothing (91% vs. 83%).

In both Hindi and Hollywood films, characters mostly wore Western attire. Over four-fifths (83%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were depicted wearing Western attire and over three-fourths (76%) of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were dressed in Western attire. A small percentage (5%) of Hollywood film characters wore fusion attire but none of the characters in Hindi films were depicted wearing fusion attire. Most of the attire in Hindi and Hollywood films was appropriate. Ninety-one percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing abroad were shown wearing appropriate cultural attire while 81% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were shown wearing appropriate cultural attire. Nine percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were shown wearing somewhat appropriate cultural attire as were 10% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity.

Sunglasses and Jewelry. Sunglasses and jewelry were more popular in Hindi films than in Hollywood films. Thirty-one percent of Hindi film characters of Indian

origin residing outside India were shown wearing sunglasses[61] compared to 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. Hindi film characters of Indian origin were three times more likely than Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity to wear western jewelry (31% vs. 10%). Nineteen percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin wore traditional Indian jewelry and 8% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin wore modern Indian jewelry; Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity wore neither traditional nor modern Indian jewelry.

Make-up. Sixty-three percent of Hindi female characters of Indian origin residing outside India were shown wearing western make-up as compared to 100% of Hollywood female characters of Indian ethnicity in America. Twenty-one percent of Hindi film female characters of Indian origin were shown wearing modern Indian make-up as compared to 0% of Hollywood female characters of Indian ethnicity. In Hindi films, only 11% of Indian female characters living abroad were wearing traditional Indian make-up as compared to 0% of Indian female characters in Hollywood films.

Lighting of Character. For both Hindi and Hollywood films, lighting was generally the same lighting for characters of the dominant culture of the film.

Aural Cues Depicting Culture and Identity

Aural cues examined in this study included the character's primary language, accent, slang, and use of idiomatic expressions, as well as the name and background music of the character.

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[61] Sunglasses are a sign of glamour and sometimes conceit in Hindi films.

Language, Accent, Slang, and Idiomatic Expressions

Language. Hindi film characters of Indian origin were more likely than Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity to speak the dominant culture's language with the dominant culture's accent, and use the dominant culture's (Indian) idiomatic expressions, but Hollywood film characters were more likely to use slang in accordance with American culture. Over half (53%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were depicted as speaking primarily Hindi as compared to 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity[62]. Almost two-fifths (38%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin spoke in mixed language (English and Hindi) compared to 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity.

Accent. According to Table 8, Hindi film characters of Indian origin were three and one half times more likely than Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity to have accents in accordance with the dominant language and accent of the films (85% vs. 24%) Over half (52%) of Hollywood characters of Indian ethnicity had accents that were not in accordance with the dominant language and accent of Hollywood films.

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[62] Although much of this is attributed to Hindi and English being the main languages spoken in India and the United States, this finding is relevant as language is a variable that relates to culture.

Table 8   *Accent Comparison of Hindi Film Characters of Indian Origin Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity in America*

Accent of Character	Type of Film Characters	
	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
In accordance with film's dominant language[63]	85	24
Not in accordance with film's dominant language	13	52
Not applicable / Unknown	2	10
Unable to Determine	0	5
Other	0	10
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .61; p < .05

Slang. Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin who lived abroad to use slang in accordance with the dominant language of the film. Examples of slang in Hollywood films included phrases such as: "cool" and "awesome;" examples of slang in Hindi films included phrases such as "*Chalega*" (That will work.) Fifty-seven percent of Hollywood film

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[63] In this study, the dominant language in a Hindi film is Hindi and the dominant language in a Hollywood film is English.

characters of Indian ethnicity compared to 15% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin used slang in accordance with the film's dominant language.

Idiomatic Expressions. Examples of idiomatic expressions in Hindi films included phrases such as "*Kahin bhi raho lekhin dil tho Hindustani rahega*" (Live where you may, you will remain Indian at heart); in Hollywood films examples of idiomatic expressions included phrases such as: "You can say that again." Hindi film characters of Indian origin were more than four times as likely as Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity to be depicted as using idiomatic expressions in accordance with the dominant language of the film (23% vs. 5%).

Name and Background Music of Character

Name of Character. Almost two-thirds (64%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin that resided outside India had Indian names and 11% had western names; close to half (48%) of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America had Indian names while 14% had western names. Eight percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin had Indian names that were shortened and/or changed to western names compared to 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. The names of 15% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were unknown while 19% of the names of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were unknown.

Background Music of Character. Forty-seven percent of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing abroad were depicted with background music of India, 32% with western music, and 6% with fusion music (an amalgamation of Indian and western music.) Background music of India was rarely used in Hollywood films; only 5% of

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characters of Indian ethnicity were depicted with background music of India. Western music was popular with over three-fifths (62%) of characters depicted with this type of music. None of the Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were depicted with fusion music.

Social, Psychological, and Attitudinal Cues Depicting Culture and Identity

To answer RQ1b, which asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America in terms of culture and identity?, social, psychological, and attitudinal cues depicting culture and identity were also examined and included: the values of the characters, and types of excesses in which the characters indulged. Also analyzed were the characters' company/circle of friends, family interaction, presence of the characters' parent(s), and overall disposition. The attitude of the character towards culture, the characters' general familiarity with culture, as well as the overall degree of cultural assimilation of the character were also examined.

Values. Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing abroad were more likely than Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America to be depicted as having values consistent with the film's dominant characters. Examples of dominant culture values in Hindi films included: respecting one's elders and taking care of them when one becomes financially independent and marrying a person of the family's approval; examples of dominant culture values in Hollywood films included: socializing with peers and dating. Hindi film characters of Indian origin were also more likely to be depicted indulging in a variety of excesses. Slightly more than half (51%) of Hindi film characters

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of Indian origin residing outside India were shown having values in accordance with the film's dominant culture as opposed to 38% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were more likely than Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America to be depicted showing social excess (19% vs. 0%). Excesses included: sexual (13% vs. 5%), material (15% vs. 5%), and leisure (11% vs. 5%). Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were four times more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin to curse excessively (24% vs. 8%). Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India to be depicted as socially inept (14% vs. 0%). Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were three times more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin to be depicted as comical/buffoon (24% vs. 8%).

Friends and Family. One-fourth (25%) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were shown with cultured, sophisticated friends as compared to 5% of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. Over half (52%) of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were shown with modest/unassuming friends while 30% of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were shown with modest/unassuming friends. Family interaction of characters was more likely to be unknown in Hollywood films than in Hindi films (76% vs. 30%). In contrast to Hollywood film characters, Hindi film characters were more likely to be very tolerant or somewhat tolerant of family (24% vs. 66%). The family structure, particularly the presence of parents in Hindi films, often serves as a cue that signifies cultural standing.

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In Hindi films, almost 7 out of 10 (68%) characters of Indian origin residing outside India were depicted with unknown parents. Both mother and father were shown for 15% of characters of Indian origin residing abroad and 9% of characters were shown as having only a father. Hollywood films also showed characters of Indian ethnicity with unknown parents. The presence of a parent (or parents) was unknown for 86% of characters of Indian ethnicity in America. None of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were shown with both mother and father and 10% of the characters were shown as having only a father.

Disposition. Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were more likely than Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America to be depicted as cold/rude (11% vs. 5%).

Cultural Viewpoint. In Hindi films, 66% of characters of Indian origin residing abroad were depicted as having a favorable attitude towards the dominant culture of the film, 11% were depicted as having an unfavorable attitude towards the dominant culture, and 6% were depicted as indifferent. In Hollywood films, 71% of characters of Indian ethnicity were depicted as having a favorable attitude towards the dominant culture of the film, 5% were depicted as having an unfavorable attitude towards the dominant culture, and 0% were depicted as indifferent. Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin to have a high level of comfort with the dominant culture (71% vs. 59%). Ten percent of Hollywood film characters were depicted as culturally inept compared to 8% of Hindi film characters. Fourteen percent of Hollywood film characters were depicted as transformed compared to 11% of

Hindi film characters. Overall, in Hindi films, 38% of characters of Indian origin

residing abroad were depicted as westernized, 32% were depicted as Indian at heart, and

30% were depicted as culturally balanced/bicultural. In Hollywood films, 95% of

characters of Indian ethnicity in America were depicted as westernized, 10% were

depicted as Indian at heart, and 14% were depicted as culturally balanced/bicultural.

Depictions of Second-Generation Indian Americans

To answer RQ2, which asked, how are second-generation Indian Americans

depicted in Hindi and Hollywood films?, the variables, U.S. citizenship/residence status

and cultural status of Indian character born outside India, were analyzed.

U.S. Citizenship/Residence Status of Character. Of Hindi and Hollywood

films that included characters of Indian ethnicity residing outside India and/or second-

generation Indian Americans, Hindi films portrayed more Indian characters residing

abroad than Hollywood films did (see Table 9). Specifically, Hindi films portrayed 72%

of these types of Indian characters compared to Hollywood films which portrayed 57% of

these types of Indian characters. Hollywood films were four times more likely than

Hindi films (24% vs. 6%) to include second-generation Indian Americans.

Table 9   *U.S. Citizenship/Residence Status of Hindi Film Characters of Indian*
Origin and Hollywood Film Characters of Indian Ethnicity

U.S. Citizenship/Residence Status of Character	Type of Film of Characters	
	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
PIO[*] with residency outside India / Person of Indian ethnicity	72	57
Other	17	5
2nd generation Indian American	6	24
Unable to Determine	6	14
(Base)	(53)	(21)

Cramer's V = .33; p < .05

Degree of Cultural Assimilation of Indian Character Born Outside India.

The content analysis results showed that second-generation Indian characters in

Hollywood films were significantly more likely than second-generation Indian characters

in Hindi films to be portrayed as assimilated into the dominant culture of the film (86%

vs. 27%). Second-generation Indian characters in Hindi films were more likely than

second-generation Indian characters in Hollywood films to be portrayed as bicultural

(40% vs. 0%) and assimilated into the non-dominant culture (33% vs. 0%) (see Table

10).

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[*] Person/People of Indian Origin (PIO)

Table 10   *Degree of Cultural Assimilation of Indian Characters Born Outside India (Second-Generation) in Hindi and Hollywood Films*

Degree of Cultural Assimilation of Indian Characters Born Outside India	Type of Film Characters	
	Hindi Film Characters Indian Origin %	Hollywood Film Characters Indian Ethnicity %
Bicultural	40	0
Assimilated into non-dominant culture	33	0
Assimilated into dominant culture	27	86
Unable to Determine	0	14
(Base)	(15)	(7)

Cramer's V = .71; p < .05

Summary

To summarize, the results of the content analysis showed that Hindi films were more likely to assign lead roles to characters of Indian origin residing outside India than Hollywood films were to assign lead roles to characters of Indian ethnicity in America. The majority of roles given to characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films were background and speaking roles. The majority of Hindi film characters and Hollywood film characters were given the least amount of screen time. The results also showed that the majority of Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin residing outside India were stereotypes; the majority of Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in America were also stereotypes. Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian

ethnicity were more likely than Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin to be marginalized; Hollywood film depictions were also more likely to be Othered than Hindi film depictions. Overall, Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity were more likely to be positive or somewhat positive than Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin. Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin were more likely than Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity to be shown as negative or somewhat negative.

In terms of socio-economics, the majority of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India were depicted as wealthy or upper class; the economic class of the majority of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America, however, was unknown. The majority of the homes of Hindi film characters of Indian origin were shown as large or very large; whereas the sizes of homes of most of the Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity could not be determined as they were not shown at all. Regarding culture and identity, the majority of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were depicted with accents not in accordance with the films' dominant language – four times more often than Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India. The type of company of Hollywood film characters was more likely than the type of company of Hindi film characters to be unknown. Similarly, the parents of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were more likely than the parents of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing abroad to be unknown. The majority of both Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India and Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were depicted as westernized.

The content analysis also revealed that the majority of depictions in Hindi films were of emigrants – Indians who migrated from India. The majority of characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films were also immigrants. Only a small fraction of people of Indian origin depicted in Hindi films were second-generation Indian Americans compared to almost one-fourth of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity who were second-generation Indian American. In terms of cultural assimilation, Hollywood film characters were more likely than Hindi film characters to be portrayed as assimilated into the dominant culture of the film. Hindi film second-generation Indian Americans, however, were more likely than Hollywood film second-generation Indian Americans to be depicted as bicultural.

These results have attempted to shed some light on how Hindi and Hollywood films have represented people of Indian origin residing outside India (Indian emigrants, and first and second-generation Indian Americans) and Indians in America (people of Indian ethnicity) respectively – particularly for second-generation Indian Americans. The following chapters (7 and 8) will use textual analysis to examine Indian-American self-representation and insight into aspects of Indian-American culture and identity that are transmitted through the entertainment medium of film.

CHAPTER 7: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INDIAN-AMERICAN FILMS

The Indian-American community has served as a support line to the Hindi film industry in many ways, including hosting Hindi film actors and events in the United States, supporting premieres of Hindi films in U.S. theaters, and renting and purchasing Hindi film DVDs, videotapes, and music CDs and cassettes (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). In fact, the Hindi film industry achieved new dimensions because of financial support from people of Indian origin around the world, especially the Indian-American population (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1994). The Indian-American community not only supports the Hindi film industry, it contributes to America's entertainment industry as well. Because Indian Americans contribute socio-politically, economically, and culturally to the world's two largest democracies and patronize both of their film industries, it might be expected that their representation in Hindi and Hollywood films would reflect their contribution. The quantitative data have shown, however, that representation of Indian Americans in both Hindi and Hollywood spheres is sparse. Representation of Indian Americans in Indian-American films is prominent although these films are few in number. To provide insight into this representation, Indian-American films will be qualitatively analyzed.

Definition of an Indian-American Film

An Indian-American film is defined as a film written, produced, and/or directed by an Indian American and that often specifically relates to the socio-economic and/or cultural issues of Indian Americans; primarily, Indian-American films are films that employ a cast generally consisting of Indian Americans. An analysis of these films

determined that there are generally two types of Indian-American films: Indian immigrant films and second-generation Indian-American films. Indian immigrant films focused primarily on immigrant experiences and were usually written by Indians, who recently[64] migrated to the United States as adults. The primary writers of these films were also the directors and are all immigrants, most of whom were drawing from their personal experiences (see Table 11).

Table 11

Details of Indian-American Immigrant Films

Title	Year	Category	Writer(s)	Director(s)	Production Type	Genre
ABCD	1999	Immigrant	Krutin Patel/ John McNamus	Krutin Patel	Independent	Drama
Wings of Hope	2001	Immigrant	Raj Basu	Raj Basu	Independent	Drama
Indian Fish In American Waters	2003	Immigrant	Manish Gupta	Manish Gupta	Independent	Comedy/ Drama
Green Card Fever	2003	Immigrant	Bala Rajasekharuni	Bala Rajasekharuni	Independent	Drama
Flavors	2004	Immigrant	Krishna D. K. Raj Nidimoru Mohit Rajhans	Krishna D. K. Raj Nidimoru	Independent	Comedy

As Table 11 shows, all of the Indian immigrant films were independent productions and, like Hindi films, most of these films were dramas that primarily portrayed Indian immigrants; examples of films that focused on immigrant experiences were *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003), *Green Card Fever* (2003), *Flavors* (2004) and *ABCD*[65]

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[64] Since the 1980s.

[65] The use of the derogatory and obsolete term ABCD (American Born Confused Desi) is erroneous as the title of the film as characters, Nina and Raj, are not born in America. This among other factors mentioned later in the analysis of this film qualifies it as an immigrant film.

(1999). Another film that was classified as an immigrant film was *Wings of Hope*[66] (2001).

    Second-generation Indian-American films focused primarily on second-generation Indian-American experiences and were usually written by second-generation Indian-Americans. These films primarily portrayed second-generation Indian Americans and focused on second-generation Indian-American experiences such as generational conflicts and Indian-American culture. All second-generation Indian-American films were independent productions, and most of the primary writers were the directors as well (see Table 12).

Table 12

Details of Second-Generation Indian-American Films

Title	Year	Category	Writer(s)	Director(s)	Production Type	Genre
Chutney Popcorn	1999	2nd-generation	Nisha Ganatra Susan Carnival	Nisha Ganatra	Independent	Drama/ Comedy
American Desi	2001	2nd-generation	Piyush Dinker Pandya	Piyush Dinker Pandya	Independent	Comedy/ Drama
American Chai	2002	2nd-generation	Anurag Mehta	Anurag Mehta	Independent	Comedy/ Drama
Where's the Party, Yaar?/ Dude, Where's the Party?	2003	2nd-generation	Benny Mathews Sohan Mehta Sunil Thakkar	Benny Mathews	Independent	Comedy
Ball and Chain/ Arrangement	2004	2nd-generation	Thomas Mortimer	Shiraz Jafri	Independent	Comedy

As Table 12 shows, most second-generation Indian-American films were comedies. Second-generation Indian-American films included *American Chai* (2002), *Where's the*

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[66] Although the protagonist is born in America, additional factors mentioned later in this analysis qualify the film as an immigrant film.

Party, Yaar? (2003) (also known as *Dude, Where's the Party?*), and *Ball and Chain* (2004) (also referred to as *Arrangement*). Also in this category were *Chutney Popcorn* (1999) and *American Desi* (2001).

Indian-American films are few in number for many reasons. First, the Indian-American generation born in America has only recently reached full-fledged economic independence, with the first majority of Indian Americans born in the late 1960s and 1970s (Agarwal, 1991). Secondly, it is highly probable that undertaking a career in film was a secondary option for a majority of this group (Agarwal, 1991), as well as Indian immigrants. And third, the kinds of experiences that a second-generation Indian American in particular faces growing up in America are ripe for depiction by the time one has been a part of the workforce for some time. This is also a reason why this sprouting film genre has great potential to continue growing. Another reason why this group of films may continue to grow is because the more recent waves of Indian immigrants are becoming part of the American workforce (Hathaway, 2001). Fourth, as the film industry becomes more expansive, it is difficult for these entrepreneurs – Indian immigrants and second-generation Indian Americans – to find financing. Also not to be overlooked is the general idea of film production as a risky and typically fruitless endeavor coupled with the fact that the mainstream film industry of Hollywood is not aware of this particular minority's economic power. Despite such obstacles, Indian Americans have managed to create a new category of films that has begun to fill the gap in a barren section of the global cinematic landscape and embodies self-expression through self-representation.

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There are "many burdens of representations" (Hall, 1992) that Indian Americans carry: representations as minorities in America; representations of Indians to Americans; representations of Americans to Indians in India. Second-generation (American-born) Indian Americans carry an additional burden: representations of Indian American youth and a brand new generation to both the United States and India. As Hall wrote, "it is true that those positionalities are never final, they're never absolute. They can't be translated in tact from one conjecture to another, they cannot be depended on to remain in the same place" (Hall, 1992, p. 278). In other words, identity is fluid, always adjusting and renewing itself, further complicating having multiple positionalities (Hall, 1992). These positionalities seem to intersect with burdens of representation. It is only natural and fitting, therefore, that Indian Americans have come to discover and experience firsthand, particularly through the creation of Indian-American films, that "the personal [is] political" (Hall, 1992, p. 282). So through this medium, how do Indian Americans go about "representing" (Watkins, 1998) and transmitting their culture?

The qualitative analysis of these films will answer the following questions: RQ3, which asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? and RQ4: In terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Most importantly, this qualitative research will attempt to answer RQ5: How are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?

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This study will help determine the place these films occupy as transmissions of culture in the global film spectrum. Up until now, this modest but crucial aspect of the film industry has not been given much attention – a surprising fact considering that these films deal with a minority that, though not very large, has made a positive contribution to the socio-economic development of the United States of America (Paek and Shah, 2003; Hathaway, 2001), the Hollywood film industry, and India and the Hindi film industry as well.

In the analysis of these films, specific attention was given to how Indian-American films represent Indian Americans to answer RQ5, which asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? Also analyzed was how Indian Americans were and were not represented with respect to representations (and/or lack of representations) of people of Indian origin residing outside India in Hindi films and people of Indian ethnicity in America in Hollywood films; this analysis will answer RQ4, which asks, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? In regards to RQ4, the qualitative analysis discovered that Indian-American immigrant films allotted lead roles to immigrant characters and supporting roles to second-generation Indian American characters (see Table 13). The qualitative research found that Indian-American immigrant films are also similar to Hindi films in that they assign more roles to Indian immigrant characters and fewer to second-generation Indian-American characters; in

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other words, generally less focus was given to second-generation Indian-American characters in Indian-American immigrant films. On a positive note, Indian-American immigrant films did include more second-generation Indian-American characters compared to Hindi and Hollywood films. Like Hindi films analyzed in this study, however, Indian-American immigrant films tended to Other, or somewhat negatively single out, second-generation Indian-American characters; one of the techniques that factored into the Othering of second-generation Indian-American characters in immigrant films was the Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

As Table 13 shows, the use of the Us-Them boundary was present in Indian-American immigrant films in a manner that is similar to the way it was utilized in Hindi films – the Us is generally comprised of members of the dominant of culture of the film; in Hindi films, this was Indian culture, and in Indian-American immigrant films, this was also Indian culture. The Them in Hindi films was comprised of those who follow the non-dominant culture of the film; in Hindi films and in Indian-American immigrant films, this was western culture. The main difference, however, is that in Hindi films, the Them was often people of Indian origin residing outside India (Indian emigrants and first and second-generation Indian Americans), whereas in Indian-American immigrant films, the Us was Indians from India (Indian emigrants) and the Them was second-generation Indian Americans. Consequently, like Hindi films, Indian-American immigrant films Other and marginalize second-generation Indian-American characters. These second-generation Indian-American characters often transformed culturally and were then accepted into the mainstream group of the film, or the group of dominant culture

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characters – in this case, Indian immigrant characters. Since Indian-American immigrant films primarily focused on Indian immigrants and their experiences, these films tended to paint a more thorough picture of Indian immigrants and their social and cultural condition than they did of second-generation Indian-Americans, thus demonstrating a major benefit of self-representation through the entertainment medium of film. The researcher developed a taxonomy of Indian-American representation that provides an overview of the findings of the qualitative analysis of Indian-American films (see Table 13).

Table 13

A Taxonomy of Representations of Indian Americans in Indian-American Films[67]

Depictions of:	In Immigrant Films		In Second-Generation Films	
	Immigrants[68]	**2nd-generation**[69]	**Immigrants**	**2nd-generation**
Prominence of Role:				
Lead	Yes	Yes	Yes[*]	Yes
Supporting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Background and speaking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Background and not Speaking	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes	Yes
General Categorical Depiction:				
Othered	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marginalized	No	Yes	No	No
Stereotypical	Inconsequential	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes
Non-stereotypical	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Yes

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[67] Because in each of these two types of films, immigrant and second-generation, there are five films with several representations, a "Yes" or "No" was assigned for the majority of representations within each group of films, unless a depiction in the minority of representations was a lead or supporting role.

[68] Since *ABCD* (1999), by its title, purports to be a film about Indians born in America, for the purpose of the taxonomy the depictions were recorded as part of the second-generation category.

[69] Because immigrant film *Flavors* (2004) does not portray second-generation Indian-American characters, depictions of second-generation Indian Americans could not be included in this column.

[*] One major instance.

Depictions of:	In Immigrant Films		In Second-Generation Films	
	Immigrants[70]	2nd-generation[71]	Immigrants	2nd-generation
Overall Rating:				
Good/positive	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes	Yes
Somewhat good/positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Neutral	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Somewhat bad/negative	No	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes
Bad/negative	Yes*	Yes	Yes	No
Types of Techniques Utilized In Films to Convey Cultural Identity/ Cultural Affiliation:				
Visual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aural	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
In-group/Out-group	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specific Categorical Depiction:				
Comical/buffoon	No	Yes	Yes	No
Superficial/vain	No	Inconsequential	Inconsequential	No
Ditsy/flighty	No	Yes	No	No
Status conscious	Yes	No	Yes	No
Culturally inept	No	Yes	Yes*	Yes*
Socially inept	No	No	Yes*	No
Sycophantic/obsequious	Yes	No	Inconsequential	No
Transformed	No	Yes	Yes*	Yes
Indian at heart	Inconsequential	Yes	No	Yes
Westernized Indian	No	Yes	Yes*	Yes*
Culturally balanced	Inconsequential	No	No	Yes
The evil Indian	Yes*	Yes	Yes*	No
The sexual object/ Sexualized	No	Yes	No	Yes

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[70] Since *ABCD* (1999), by its title, purports to be a film about Indians born in America, for the purpose of the taxonomy the depictions were recorded as part of the second-generation category.

[71] Because immigrant film *Flavors* (2004) does not portray second-generation Indian-American characters, depictions of second-generation Indian Americans could not be included in this column.

	In Immigrant Films		In Second-Generation Films	
Depictions of:	Immigrants	2nd-generation	Immigrants	2nd-generation
Female as Protagonist	Yes*	No	No	Yes*
Female as Secondary to Male Protagonist	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Class of Character:				
Wealthy	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes
Upper class	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Middle class	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lower class	No	No	No	No
Poor	No	Yes	No	No
From lower/poor to Wealthy/upper	No	No	No	No
From upper/wealthy To lower/poor	No	No	No	No

As Table 13 shows, Indian-American immigrant films did not Other immigrant

characters, but they did Other second-generation Indian-American characters. Although

second-generation Indian-American films did Other immigrant characters, they also

Othered second-generation Indian-American characters as well. Immigrant films also did

not marginalize immigrant characters, but they did marginalize second-generation Indian-

American characters. It is important to note that second-generation Indian-American

films did not marginalize either group. According to Table 13, Indian-American

immigrant films did not stereotype Indian immigrants, but, like Hindi films, they did

stereotype second-generation Indian Americans. Although second-generation Indian-

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* One major instance.

American films stereotyped second-generation Indian-American characters, they subverted these stereotypes (Culturally Inept, Transformed, and Westernized) as the qualitative analysis will reveal later. Table 13 also shows that second-generation Indian-American films were the only films that depicted major characters as culturally balanced or bicultural. The qualitative analysis of representations in second-generation Indian-American films will expound on how such characters were portrayed and how they served as responses to depictions (and/or lack of) in Hindi and Hollywood films.

In terms of depictions of female characters in Indian-American films, Indian-American immigrant and second-generation films did not portray Indian immigrants as sexual objects and/or sexualized, but both types of films depicted second-generation Indian-American females as sexual objects and/or sexualized. In both types of films, Indian-American females were generally portrayed as secondary in relation to the male protagonists. Only two exceptions exist: one depiction in an immigrant film and one depiction in a second-generation film. In the Indian-American immigrant film, *ABCD* (1999), a female character, Nina, was a co-protagonist, but the depiction overall was negative; the other exception was the portrayal of a second-generation Indian-American female and protagonist, Reena, in the second-generation Indian-American film, *Chutney Popcorn* (1999).

As previously mentioned, the types of topics that were emphasized in Indian-American films varied depending on the type of film. Indian-American immigrant films were more likely than second-generation Indian-American films to highlight issues that are particularly salient to immigrants while second-generation Indian-American films

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were more likely to address and portray issues and subject matter that are more

significant and specific to second-generation Indian Americans (see Table 14).

Table 14

Table of Topics Addressed In Hindi, Hollywood, Indian-American Immigrant and Second-Generation Indian-American Films

Topics:	Hindi	Hollywood	Immigrant	2nd-generation
Generational conflict	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes	Yes
Family interaction	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes	Yes
Cultural identity	Yes	Inconsequential	Yes	Yes
Diversity within Indian-American communities	No	No	Yes	Yes
Indian-American culture/ Biculturalism	No	No	No	Yes

As Table 14 shows, Indian-American immigrant films were similar to Hindi films in that

both of these types of films addressed topics that related to generational conflict, family

interaction, and cultural identity. Their approaches to such subject matter were also

similar as mentioned later in the analysis of Indian-American immigrant films. Unlike

Hindi films, however, Indian-American immigrant films portrayed diversity within

Indian-American communities. Nevertheless, as the qualitative analysis will reveal,

Indian-American immigrant films are somewhat similar to Hindi films in terms of their

depictions of second-generation Indian Americans. The qualitative analysis of both

Indian-American immigrant and second-generation Indian-American films will in turn

underscore the significance of self-representation and will bring to light the need for

Indian-American cinema, particularly second-generation Indian-American cinema and

will answer the research questions for the qualitative portion of this study.

Analysis of Indian-American Films by Indian Immigrants

Before delving into the qualitative analysis of Indian-American immigrant films, the plots of each of the films have been summarized and provided in the table below to help familiarize the reader with each unique story (see Table 15).

Table 15

Plot Summaries of Indian-American Immigrant Films

Title of Film	Plot Summary
ABCD (1999)	The story of two siblings, Raj and Nina, who were born in India but brought up in America by their widowed mother whose dream it is to see her children happily married to Indians. Raj is an accountant, who is engaged to an Indian woman, and Nina, who works in an advertising firm, refuses to conform (as she sees it) and therefore, mostly dates white men. Their mother often regrets having emigrated – particularly when there has been a conflict with Nina, whom she wishes would give an Indian man a chance: "I wish we never came here. We should have stayed in India, and I should have found spouses for both of you and our lives would have made more sense." After their mother's death, Raj breaks off his engagement and quits his job, and Nina marries a white man in a church.
Wings of Hope (2001)	Semi-autobiographical account of director Basu's own story depicted through second-generation Indian American, Ravi, who wants to pursue filmmaking, but due to his mother's death and conflicts with his father takes to drinking heavily and falls into the company of questionable individuals, who take him to a house where people are doing drugs. Ravi is arrested and later finds himself estranged from his father and also his second-generation Indian-American girlfriend, Kaajal, who becomes impregnated by a white man who refuses to marry her. Ravi attends film school, becomes sober, and marries Kaajal.

Indian Fish In American Waters (2003)	A love story between Indian IT (Information Technology) professional Naveen Reddy, who has come to America for the first time, and second-generation Indian American, Megha Patel, an artist who works in advertising. Despite mild doubts from friends and family, this couple falls in love, but Indian-American Bobby Patel, Naveen's boss, breaks them up by defacing Naveen's character and gets engaged to Megha. Eventually, Bobby has a change of heart and confesses his wrongdoing, and Megha and Naveen are reunited.
Green Card Fever (2003)	A love story between Murali, a young Indian with hopes to fulfill his dreams in America, and second-generation Indian American, Bharathi, a young woman whose parents are trying to fix an arranged marriage for her, although she has a white boyfriend. Second-generation Indian-American immigration attorney Om (who is dating a white woman and is referred to by Murali as "unfit to be an Indian"), is encouraged by his grandfather to take on pro bono work for illegal immigrants tangled in a corrupt system. Primarily, the film focuses on Murali, his hardships, and the immigration system.
Flavors (2004)	Depictions of the lives of multiple Indians working in the IT industry in America. This variety of characters provides for depth and dimension of Indian immigrants, ranging from visiting parents who are meeting their future white daughter-in-law for the first time to assimilated Candy, whose missing accent baffles her unemployed roommates, referred to as "The Bench Crowd."

ABCD (1999)

Plot Summary: The story of two siblings, Raj and Nina, who were born in India but brought up in America by their widowed mother whose dream it is to see her children happily married to Indians. Raj is an accountant, who is engaged to an Indian woman, and Nina, who works in an advertising firm, refuses to conform (as she sees it) and therefore, mostly dates white men. Their mother often regrets having emigrated – particularly when there has been a conflict with Nina, whom she wishes would give an Indian man a chance: "I wish we never came here. We should have stayed in India, and I should have found spouses for both of you and our lives would have made more sense." After their mother's death, Raj breaks off his engagement and quits his job, and Nina marries a white man in a church.

Produced on a $200,000 budget, *ABCD* (1999) is an independent film and the first Indian-American film as well as the first Indian-American immigrant film. The story and screenplay were written by Krutin Patel, who also directed the film and co-wrote it with James McManus (imdb.com). The film tells the story of two siblings, Raj (Faran Tahir) and Nina (Sheetal Sheth), who were born in India but brought up in America by their widowed mother (Madhur Jaffrey) who wishes to see her children happily married to Indians. Raj is an accountant and is engaged to an Indian woman; his sister, Nina works in advertising, refuses to conform (as she sees it) and therefore, mostly dates white men. Their mother often regrets having emigrated, especially when she has conflicts with Nina, whom she wishes would marry an Indian: "I wish we never came here. We should have stayed in India, and I should have found spouses for both of you and our lives would have made more sense."

RQ3 asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? This study found that visual and aural cues were used to establish the cultural identity and bearings of the characters in this film. During the first few scenes that introduced Raj and Nina, rock music loudly played for Nina's scenes while culturally neutral music played in the background for Raj. To a greater extent, the cultural standing of these characters was expressed visually as well. In the second scene of the film, the audience was presented with a close-up of Nina's exposed midriff. In contrast, the audience was given a glimpse of Raj's face, and he was shown wearing business attire. Nina was lifting a barbell and eating dry cornflakes after a sexual encounter with someone she just met the night before while Raj was shown diligently working at his desk. These brief but information-flooded scenes helped quickly paint cultural portraits of these characters through cues which hinted at Nina's connection to western cultural influences and Raj's ambivalent or unknown cultural orientation. These scenes also established two stereotypical categories of the Asian male and female (Paek and Shah, 2003) in western media.

RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? The film began with two possibly stereotypical portrayals of Indians: the Indian woman as a sexual(ized) object and the Indian man as the model minority in the workplace (Paek and Shah, 2003). In terms of visual illustration, the trope of the camera objectified Nina by focusing on a portion of her body. In terms of aural illustration, Nina said to her one-night stand, "I just met you last night," thereby reinforcing a particular image. In a matter of a few seconds,

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it was established that Nina is sexual, perhaps even promiscuous – recalling the western media stereotypes of black women as promiscuous (Larson, 1994), adhering to the western media stereotypes of Asian women as exotic (Paek and Shah, 2003), and fortifying the Hindi film stereotypes of Indian women who live outside India as morally corrupt and sexual objects, a stereotype also found in the Hollywood films examined in this study. Raj, on the other hand, was shown in a suit and tie and diligently typing away in his office; thus far, this image offered the model minority "workaholic" stereotype often depicted in American media (Paek and Shah, 2003). Simultaneously, however, exists the model minority "successfully assimilated" but non-threatening stereotype (Paek and Shah, 2003). As the film progressed, we learned that Raj was indeed assimilated into the dominant culture yet still felt a need to find himself and possibly his position in society. The problem with such model minority stereotypes and "quiet achievement" as Paek and Shah emphasized is that they frequently prevented Asian Americans from advancing up the ranks. This was exemplified in this film when Raj did not receive a promotion that he deserved; his white friend, Brian, who falls asleep on the job and forgot to give an important memo to Raj, was promoted instead. When Raj after some goading from Julia finally asked his boss why he did not receive the promotion, Mackenzie said: "I believe that you are a better accountant than Brian, but you're not as outgoing and you don't possess the social skills for directly dealing with clients the way he does. […] It's just a personality matter." With this event and candid dialogue, Patel has openly articulated a stereotype found in Hollywood films: The Socially Inept Indian. His intent to expose a stereotypical image of Indians was clear and successfully executed.

The fact that it was manifestly articulated is a significant step in the field of film production as this seems to be the first Indian-American film to do so.

RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? The qualitative study found that character juxtapositions, the technique of utilizing one character to help establish the status of another in the same scene, was an additional method that Patel utilized to help define Nina and Raj's cultural standing. At the beginning of the film, the audience was not introduced solely to Nina; her random sex partner, a member of the dominant culture and race, was also present. After their sexual encounter, he tried to coax Nina again.

White guy:	*"Come on! I thought you Indian women were supposed to give your man whatever they want."*
Nina:	*"Get out!"*
White guy:	*[Laughs]. "Come on! I'm sorry. Bad joke."*
Nina:	*"I said get out!"*

This character not only verbalized a common stereotype of Asian women (Paek and Shah, 2003), but specified it with the phrase "you Indian women." The use of the phrase, "to give your man whatever they want" also recalled an Asian stereotype of women as submissive (Larson, 1994; Paek and Shah, 2003) – so two stereotypes, though polar opposites, were filled by the same character (Larson, 1994): one is sexually passionate and the other is submissively passive (Paek and Shah, 2003). When Nina showed how

serious she was, however, about kicking him out, he switched to an altered version of the "passionate" stereotype and called her a "psycho-slut" – now Nina is labeled as passionate and impassioned. This scene may be the first onscreen to not only include such blatant dialogue regarding this stereotype, but also the first to show an Indian-American character acknowledge the acts of stereotyping and objectification and spurn it. When Raj showed up at Nina's apartment, yet another stereotype was voiced by the same character: "Oh, [expletive]! There's another one! Hey, I thought you guys were supposed to be non-violent." The term, "non-violent" was an obvious reference to Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and peaceful protesting (as delineated in chapter two). The phrases "another one" and "you guys" served as generalizations, particularly the familiar "you guys" – another phrase used to delineate and separate the "Us" from the "Them" (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

A very interesting juxtaposition that addressed the "successfully assimilated" model minority stereotype occurs when Brian asked Raj why he confronted MacKenzie about the promotion.

> Raj: *Because of my race.*
>
> Brian: *Come on. I me – I mean – if you were black, maybe.*
>
>   *[…]*
>
> Raj: *You don't think it had anything to do with that do you?*
>
> Brian: *I don't know. I think you're probably being ridiculous. If I knew that was the reason, you know I'd quit in a second.*

This was an interesting juxtaposition because Brian's response negated the idea of the Indian race as one that qualifies being racially discriminated against by members of the dominant race and culture with his statement, "If you were black, maybe." This dialogue also recalled the stereotype of the "successfully assimilated" model minority and its repercussions (Paek and Shah, 2003); Indians are not visible enough to be discriminated against let alone be recognized for a promotion, and according to the stereotype of Asians, they are non-threatening (Paek and Shah, 2003). This dialogue was also significant as it delineated Raj's blurry perception of the society around him as well his position in it. Raj's instinct said it was racism, but his best friend, of the dominant race and culture, thought that Raj was being "ridiculous." Furthermore, Raj's self-doubt coupled with Brian's reservations regarding whether the decision was based on racism demonstrated how such an event can be trivialized and not recognized by members of the dominant race and culture.

Another example of character juxtaposition with a person of the dominant culture and race was shown through Julia, a white woman who started working at Raj's office. In contrast to the previous character, Julia seemed fascinated by India and Indian culture, and possibly by Raj as well. She asked Raj to describe India in 10 words or less.

Raj:	*"Well, I have never seen a flying carpet."*
Julia:	*[giggles] "Yeah, well have you seen snake charmers?"*
Raj:	*"Yeah, sure."*
Julia:	*"Did watching them make you nervous?"*
Raj:	*"No, exciting."*

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Julia:	*"Did you ever see one bite the guy?"*
Raj:	*"Never even heard of it. Those guys know their stuff."*
Julia:	*"Were you born in India?"*
Raj:	*"Yes, I'm a desi, but I came here when I was eight."*
Julia:	*"Desi."*
Raj:	*"Uh, um, an Indian word for Indian."*
Julia:	*"What's your most vivid memory of your childhood there?"*
Raj:	*"I don't know. Lots of them."*
Julia:	*"Like what?"*
Raj:	*"Monkeys on a rooftop. I could hear them thudding around up there at night. I used to slip under the covers. Just imagine? Ten monkeys, 50 to 60 lbs. each on a tin roof."*
Julia:	*"Golly."*

These stereotypical statements contributed to the Othering (rendering as "different" or inferior in comparison to the mainstream or dominant) and stereotyping of India and Indian culture; although Julia's character seemed genuinely interested in learning about India, there was a visibly thick layer of exoticism. By including this dialogue, it seemed that Patel's initial intention was to verbalize a stereotype through the questions and assumptions of Julia, but instead, Patel had Raj reinforce the stereotype that Julia (and possibly some non-Indian audience members) already had; Raj's replies almost encouraged Julia's follow-up questions – a phenomenon that is problematic, particularly

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in the study of stereotyping, but even more so with in-group stereotyping (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

When Nina attends an Indian wedding with her Caucasian companion Sam, dialogues and close-ups framed her as uncomfortable; her anxiety was particularly evident with the juxtaposition between her and Sam. He said, "It's about time you started sharing this part of your life with me." This statement revealed that Nina did not allow her cultural worlds to overlap. It also affirmed the existence of two cultures: one Indian and one American and that Nina was unable or unwilling to reconcile the two. Once again, character juxtaposition was used by Patel to define Nina's cultural standing. Although it seemed that typically Sam would feel like an outsider at the wedding ceremony, Sam made statements such as: "This is totally fascinating," and "I like it; it's not stuffy like American weddings. Yeah, I like it a lot." Again, the question arises: Is this the exoticism and objectification of Indian culture or were these statements included in the film to help classify Nina, or both? As Nina's eyes panned the room and caught a glimpse of the bride tearfully saying goodbye to her parents, Nina emotionally declared, "I'll marry you, Sam. But not like this. In a church – where everybody's happy." Through this juxtaposition, Nina's seemingly strong disconnect with Indian culture was elucidated against Sam's interest and "fascination" with Indian culture. Symbolically, Nina was rejecting Indian culture in favor of the dominant culture, rather than making an attempt at the fusion of both, or at the very least, the acceptance of both.

As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Thus far, the

qualitative analysis has found that the issues addressed in this film have included racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and exoticism and objectification by members of the dominant group as evident in Hollywood film stereotypes of people of Indian ethnicity, but there are also instances of Othering and in-group stereotyping (Ramirez Berg, 2002), the inclusion of which resounds of the Hindi film stereotyping of Indian Americans and Indians who have migrated to other countries, but particularly second-generation Indian Americans. At the Indian wedding, an Indian woman observes from afar that Nina has brought a white man as her guest.

Indian woman #1:	*Friend?*
Indian woman #2:	*Boyfriend.*
Indian woman #1:	*What is she wearing? Doesn't she know this is an Indian wedding?*
Indian Woman #2:	*Typical ABCD since I've known her.*
Indian woman #1:	*Huh?*
Indian woman #2:	*American Born Confused Desi.*
Indian woman #1:	*Hmm.*
	[All laugh.]

Towards the end of this film the definition of the offensive term used as the title of this film was finally given; however, no counter-term was defined, nor mentioned. This demarcated the Us-Them boundary; the "We," meaning members of the in-group (Ramirez Berg, 2002), was comprised of those comfortable with Indian culture –

signified in this dialogue by Indian clothing, mingling with fellow Indians, and not bringing a non-Indian to the wedding. The "They," meaning members of the out-group (Ramirez Berg, 2002), were comprised of those who were not comfortable with or did not actively participate in Indian culture – signified by Nina's western clothing, drinking at the bar and not socializing, and bringing a white boyfriend to the wedding. Nina is an outcast, an out-group member; she is the Other (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

Another instance of in-group stereotyping occurred when an Indian man with an accent was working at a kiosk and Nina stopped to buy something. He tried to converse with her and when she rebuffed him and walked away, he said, "Sali! [expletive] Bitch!" Ashok, an Indian man who came from India to court Nina as a set-up, stopped at the same kiosk:

Indian man at kiosk:	*She your fiancée? The one you were speaking to.*
Ashok:	*No. I wish that she was.*
Indian man at kiosk:	*No, you don't. You must be cautious. She's been in this country too long.*
Ashok:	*Ah, maybe so.*
Indian man at kiosk:	*Believe me; she's a whore. They get that way here.*

Once again, a degrading term was used for Nina, the Indian American, by a person who seems to have recently migrated from India, a member of the in-group. This evoked stereotypes of Indian-American women, (as well as other people of Indian origin residing abroad), as found in Hindi films, such as *Jo Bole So Nihaal* (2005) and *Aa Ab Laut*

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Chalen (Come, Let's Go Back) (1999). Like the various stereotypical Indian characters residing outside India in these Hindi films, Nina smoked, drunk alcohol, swore, wore inappropriate clothing to Indian functions, was sexually active, and was not religious. The Indian man at the kiosk warned Ashok and referred to Nina as part of a category: "They get that way here." He tried to make Ashok aware of the line, the boundary that separates "Us" – him and Ashok – from "Them" – Indian Americans (Ramirez Berg, 2002), specifically, Indian-American women.

ABCD (1999) offers a variety of serious issues that affect not only Indian Americans but many people of different races and ethnicities. As one of the first Indian-American films, it deserves recognition. Its forthright dialogues are bold and its open-ended questions lend a critical air of realism. This is one of the first films ever to focus on an Indian-American family, experiences of racial discrimination and being stereotyped by the dominant culture as well as by the in-group, in addition to cultural and generational clashes, as well as other issues. This film should also be commended for giving ample dialogue to the mother (as most of the qualitatively analyzed films in this study do not) and providing almost voyeuristic glimpses into the lives of these characters on such a limited budget. It is also straightforward in its presentation of stereotypes of Indians and Indian Americans made by members of the dominant race and culture and in-group members respectively (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

The film, however, seems to be telling the story of an Indian immigrant family through the perspective of some of the Hindi films analyzed in this study – not in terms of their formats or endings, but rather in terms of the interaction between Indians and

Indian Americans. In respect to RQ4, which asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films?, the qualitative research showed that the film blindly used Hindi and Hollywood stereotypes such as the Morally Corrupt Indian, the Culturally Inept Indian, and the Indian woman as a sexual object (Paek and Shah, 2003) coupled with a general lack of confrontation and subversion. The purpose of inclusion of the stereotypes, particularly those made by the in-group, is not clear as they were not outright addressed. Also, neither of the characters, Raj and Nina, was born in America so to have American Born in the title is a technical mistake. Lastly, from a feminist perspective, the adhesion to age-old stereotypes of Hollywood and other American media (Paek and Shah, 2003), such as the woman as a sexual object (Paek and Shah, 2003), or in a state of despair and in need of rescuing, hurt the presentation of Nina's character, an issue that will be explored further in the later part of this analysis.

Wings of Hope (2001)

Plot summary: Semi-autobiographical account of director Basu's own story depicted through second-generation Indian American, Ravi, who wants to pursue filmmaking, but due to his mother's death and conflicts with his father takes to drinking heavily and falls into the company of questionable individuals, who take him to a house where people are doing drugs. Ravi is arrested and later finds himself estranged from his father and also his second-generation Indian-American girlfriend, Kaajal, who becomes impregnated by a white man who refuses to marry her. Ravi attends film school, becomes sober, and marries Kaajal.

Chronologically, the second immigrant film released is *Wings of Hope* (2001), created by Raj Basu, also an Indian born and raised in India. Forced by his parents to

become an engineer, Basu squelched his dreams of becoming a filmmaker and migrated

to the United States to work as an engineer and then as a professional in the computer

industry (www.upperstall.com/wingsofhope.html). Eventually, Basu decided to fulfill his

dream of making this film, which cost approximately $300,000 and was shot in 19 days

(www.upperstall.com/wingsofhope.html). Basu told his own story through the character,

Ravi (Ismail Bashey), a second-generation Indian American who wants to pursue

filmmaking, but due to his mother's death and conflicts with his father takes to drinking

heavily and falls into the company of questionable individuals, who take him to a house

where people are doing drugs; consequently, Ravi is arrested. Based on Basu's personal

life experiences in India, the film portrays the issues that he feels Indian-American youth

experience. Basu stated:

> Like Ravi, I had a great love for film, but becoming a filmmaker was
> unthinkable. My father could never accept that filmmaking could be a
> career. I was a little like Ravi in that I was rebellious and in conflict with
> my dad. I had a dark side. I used to drink to escape and would hang around
> with friends from all classes of life. I tried to look through myself, to look
> through the eyes of a boy who grew up here in the USA. What would he
> face if confronted with drugs? (www.upperstall.com/wingsofhope.html).

While this film is indeed an example of self-expression, it is vital that one distinguish

between a film that is semi-autobiographical and one that is meant to be a form of self-

expression of a particular community.

At the beginning of the film, a cursory line about the background of the Khannas

was provided. The scene opened with the sound of a newborn crying. In white text on a

black screen the text read: "The Khannas immigrated to the U.S.A. in the early 1960s.

Ravi Khanna was born in Vienna, Virginia." The text faded and the next line read: "25

years later." Unlike most films, *Wings of Hope* attempted to provide some background on the Indian-American family – a duly noted unique feature of this genre of films; however, although Basu provided information about the Khannas and Ravi, it was limited to two sentences and a time reference. Furthermore, although one initially appreciates this mention, upon an in-depth review of the film, one wonders why it was so important for Basu to clarify from the onset that the character being portrayed was born and raised in America as opposed to leaving it to the dialogue to reveal this or allowing the viewer to pick up cues as with other films.

RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? In the opening scene of *Wings of Hope*, the audience was shown a very large home, similar to the kinds of homes shown in the Hindi films content analyzed in this study[72]. Ravi was shown smoking a cigarette and drinking alcohol with a friend, who was dressed in black leather, and wearing a spiked bracelet and chain – another scene reminiscent of some of the Hindi films analyzed in this study. Another factor this film has in common with a majority of these Hindi films was that the mother of the fallen and/or struggling bicultural Indian-American character was absent. A few examples of such Hindi films in which the mother of the person of Indian origin residing outside India was absent are *Pardes* (Foreign Country) (1997), *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back) (1999), and *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (I Live In Your Heart) (1999). In these films, it is implied and often articulated that since the mother represents the link to the "mother culture" – in these

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[72] The content analysis shows that 42% of homes of Indians residing outside India are depicted as very large.

films, Indian culture – the absence of the mother results in behavior that is framed as culturally cold and lacking, that is, in the context of these films, un-Indian, and sometimes even anti-Indian. Not only does this result in gross over-simplification, it establishes the Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002) and consequently provides fodder for the fostering of stereotypes.

In a dialogue with Indian-American girlfriend Kaajal (Sheetal Sheth), Ravi was depicted as upset that Kaajal's parents did not approve of their relationship because Ravi is a law school drop-out and seems to have an alcohol problem. His dialogue also clearly demarcates the Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002). "It's that damn Indian culture and their stupid parties! That's all they talk about. Each other. You know, everybody has to be perfect. No mistakes allowed. Reputaaaaations! That's all they care about." The words *that*, *their*, and *they* are all terms that either single out, demarcate, separate and classify thus establishing an Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002); in this case, the "Us," according to Ravi, is comprised of second-generation Indian-Americans and then the "Them" are Indians and those who follow "Indian culture." Because RQ5 asked how Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, represent themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film, it is important to remind the reader that the representation of second-generation Ravi is not a case of a second-generation Indian American by a second-generation Indian American, but rather a representation of second-generation Indian American by an Indian immigrant of his own feelings. The reason this is an important to emphasize is because this fact also helps answer RQ4,

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which asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Hindi films portrayed vices and intense conflicts with Indian culture through representations of Indian Americans, but particularly through representations of second-generation Indian Americans. An example of such strong anti-Indian sentiment was shown in Hindi film *Pardes* (1997) in which second-generation Indian American, Rajiv, insulted India and Indian culture.

Another pertinent dialogue in this film transpired between Ravi and his father, who briefly mentions how he, like many Indian immigrants, came to this country with only a few dollars in his pocket. The conflict escalated as Ravi tried to explain why he did not want to attend law school anymore.

[flashback]

Father: *"Why won't you go back?"*

Ravi: *"What's the point of law school when I'm not interested in being a lawyer?"*

Father: *"Well, you scored well in your SATs; you saved through school. Now you have a bit of difficulty, you want to quit. Don't give up so easily."*

Ravi: *"Dad, you and I see challenge very differently. For you, it's making a big name for yourself and making the big bucks!"*

Father: *"So? What's wrong with that? Most people want that. Most people can't afford the luxury of pursuing their dreams. You don't know what it's like to come to a strange country with $40 in your pocket. You never had to struggle."*

Ravi: *"No, I haven't cuz you provided everything."*

Father: *"You're dead right. It's the biggest mistake I ever made."*

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Ravi:	*"Are you insulting me for that?"*
Father:	*"No, I'm trying to make you see reality."*

This conflict was primarily generational although one cannot deny that culture played a role; however, this particular dialogue centered on ideas of financial security and the definition of success in life. While it can be argued that such ideologies stem from cultural roots, this particular conflict seemed to be more of a generational one and perhaps even more an argument about economics and class status than a culture clash.

Kaajal's parents also shared the same views as Ravi's father; Kaajal informed Ravi: "You know, my parents asked me how you're going to provide a future for us. They don't see a future in film and they keep comparing me to others. It's this whole status thing. I don't know." Again, the Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002) was outlined, particularly where Kaajal disclosed that her parents essentially evaluated her and matched her up against "others." Kaajal's parents did, however, have strong conflicting cultural viewpoints as delineated in their argument regarding Kaajal and Ravi and Ravi's recent arrest on drug charges:

Father:	*"Don't tell me that the other Indian kids in our community are growing up like Ravi! And don't tell me that this is due to loss of family values! The point is Ravi has accepted the wrong things from this society!"*
Mother:	*"Yeah but, listen, she is young and she's in love. Why don't you understand that she has grown up here in this country in a different time – not like us. Let her find out for herself what a mess Ravi has made of her life. Don't push her so much."*
Father:	*"No, I don't agree with you. She's not old enough to understand anything. She's my only daughter. Only daughter and I'll be damned if she marries that guy – I'll be damned!"*

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This dialogue was unique in that two opposing points of view were outlined, thereby giving Indian immigrant parents a voice. Interestingly, Kaajal's father said that he did not believe most Indian youths were turning out like Ravi; he also implied that it was not Ravi's family at fault, but rather Ravi himself who was to blame for he was the one who "accepted the wrong things" from American society. Although this statement – that other Indian Americans were not turning out like Ravi – can be quoted to counter some Hindi film generalizations and stereotypes regarding Indian Americans, it does not compensate for the fact that the two main second-generation Indian-Americans in this film were: an alcoholic law school drop-out who ended up serving time in jail and a rebellious youth who was impregnated by someone who already has a girlfriend. One single statement uttered in the heat of an argument does not counterbalance the visual images, actions, and dialogues throughout a film (Mirzoeff, 2002; Kellner, 1995; Newton, 2001).

On another note, this film has perhaps the first parental character out of all of these films to highlight that an Indian American raised in America may have had a different upbringing than Indians of the older generation in India. She pointed out that Kaajal "has grown up here in this country in a different time – not like us." The mere acknowledgment that her child has had a different environment growing up in comparison to her parents is important. Once again, however, it is vital to mention that there is an overlapping that occurs in these discussions between and about these two generations. This theme was more prevalent in films made by Indians from India than in second-generation Indian-American films, which tended to focus more on cultural issues,

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fusion, growth, the development of Indian-American culture, and interaction with other Indian Americans while keeping issues with parents more peripheral.

Despite Basu's attempts "to look through the eyes of a boy who grew up … in the USA" (www.upperstall.com/wingsofhope.html), this film oversimplifies and complicates issues through its forced dialogues and distended storylines. Although the question Basu wanted to answer – what would an Indian-American boy do if faced with drugs – was somewhat answered in his endeavor, the purpose of the film remains convoluted. What was the purpose in making the characters Indian American? Indian culture was mentioned, but it was not discussed; it was simply used as a scapegoat as epitomized by Ravi's sentiments: "It's that damn Indian culture." The generational and cultural clashes were articulated; however, this was primarily through the parents' dialogues; therefore, although the protagonists ware second-generation Indian Americans, regarding culture, this film focused more on the philosophies of the Indian immigrant parents and their struggles as to how they deal with their rebellious children – disowning and forcing marriage were two ways shown. As RQ3 asked: how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? The qualitative research found that in this film, the blending of the two cultures into Indian-American culture was not illustrated; a few Americans were shown in a positive light, Indian parents were depicted as upset and weary, and second-generation Indian Americans are depicted in dire circumstances created by their own choices.

Basu tries too hard to stuff multiple stories into this film and consequently leaves the viewer with a disorganized presentation and hardly anything for the viewer to believe

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as the film includes a multitude of tribulations ranging from addiction problems to isolation and broken families; he then sloppily ties everything together with a hurried marriage. Overall, this film is not a drama, it is a melodrama. An excess and exaggeration of vices are shown in this film without cinematic or social purpose under the guise of the misappropriated Indian-American, specifically second-generation Indian-American, identity. In doing so, it objectifies the Indian-American (and second-generation Indian-American) identity, has second-generation Indian-American characters placing blame on Indian culture, while Indian parents blame the Indian-American youth taking "the wrong things from this [American] society," calling to memory similar scenes and perspectives from Hindi films such as *Pardes* (Foreign Country) (1997), *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back) (1999), *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (I Live In Your Heart) (1999), *Om Jai Jagdish* (2002), and others.

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Indian Fish In American Waters (2003)

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Plot summary: A love story between Indian IT (Information Technology) professional Naveen Reddy, who has come to America for the first time, and second-generation Indian American, Megha Patel, an artist who works in advertising. Despite mild doubts from friends and family, this couple falls in love, but Indian-American Bobby Patel, Naveen's boss, breaks them up by defacing Naveen's character and gets engaged to Megha. Eventually, Bobby has a change of heart and confesses his wrongdoing, and Megha and Naveen are reunited.

Indian Fish In American Waters (2003) is another inexpensive film; it was made within thirty days on a budget of $90,000 (*The Indian Express*, November 2003). Written and directed by Manish Gupta, an IT (Information Technology) consultant and

Indian immigrant to the U.S. (*The Indian Express*, November 2003), it tells the love story between IT professional Naveen Reddy (Raj Vasudeva) who has come to America for the first time and America-born Megha Patel (Shweta Malhotra), an artist who works in advertising. The opening credits are shown in a colorful animation format. The tagline reads: "This film is about FOBs and ABCDs. FOB = Fresh Off the Boat" and underneath is written: "ABCD = American Born Compassionate Desi" with Compassionate in a larger font. In a noticeable attempt to confront stereotypes from the onset, this film judiciously defines the two acronyms that some might use to categorize (and stereotype) the protagonists in this story. Unfortunately, the amended term does not seem to have caught on, as most media in India stills use the offensive version (e.g.: *The Indian Express*).

Another melodrama, *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003) began with a first-person narration by Naveen, establishing that the story about to be told was chiefly his own. "They say U.S. is the land of opportunity. […] Actually, they are right. I came here only one year ago, and very soon I had everything going, but suddenly, it all slipped away […] It all started a year ago." This is a film that primarily tells the story of an Indian immigrant in America. Naveen had three roommates, descriptions of whom were given in a letter/email to his parents in India and to the audience with a voiceover and narrative visuals. These three characters who, like Naveen, also were from India were introduced with anecdotal scenes. These quirky and endearing mini-portraits allowed the audience to catch a glimpse of these minor characters' personalities without resorting to stereotyping. For example, Imran Khan was an avid cricket fan from Mumbai who was

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willing to fake a stomach ache and skip work to watch the match he paid 70 dollars to relish. This portrayal counteracts the stereotype of the hardworking, workaholic stereotype of Asians (Paek and Shah, 2003), thus helping answer RQ4, which asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Another character was introduced with Indian music playing in the background. Naveen narrated, "This is Jainalika. Oops. Sughandhi Ramaswamy from Chennai." This was a tongue-in-cheek remark about south Indians' names being unusually long. Jainalika called out from the kitchen as she searched the refrigerator, "Hey guys, did anybody eat the sambhar I left here last night?!" When her roommates feigned innocence and replied no, Jainalika scornfully said under her breath, "These north Indian boys! Love south Indian food, but always make fun of it! [calling out] Well, you won't be able to digest it!" This dialogue was a successful attempt at playfully addressing and subverting stereotypes within Indian communities. RQ5 asked: how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? Thus far, the qualitative research has shown that through the use of humor and juxtaposition, Gupta was able to paint a fun and charming account of Naveen's roommates who have come from different parts of India to work in America. Unfortunately, such was not the case with the portrayals of most second-generation Indian-American characters in this film. Naveen's boss, Bhavish Patel (Bobby); Megha's confidant, Rushmi (Rush); and Megha's

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brother, Alpesh (Al), were three examples of stereotypical portrayals of Indian-American characters.

Bhavish Patel, who goes by the name of Bobby, served as the "villain" in the film. His self-appointed name, Bobby, served as a cue that connoted his 'cultural status' (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Bobby was shown with excessive gel in his hair, used to connote his 'western' cultural standing, and holding a football, a visual cue to connote all-American. Bobby was wearing a brown suit with a beige shirt and pewter tie: a plain and dry visual in juxtaposition to the roommates' colorful portraits preceding Bobby's introduction. The viewer encountered Bobby after having met Naveen's affable roommates. Their lighthearted scenes and dialogues served as grounds for comparison to Bobby's patronizing welcome and dictatorial orientation. As Bobby gave details of the rules, his voice fell into background noise and was superimposed with sound effects and another dialogue that echoed what Naveen felt (and transmitted to the audience) that Bobby was really saying, "My name is Bobby Patel, founder of Exploit the Consultants, Incorporated." In a few seconds, the negative character sketch of Bobby Patel was established.

When Bobby found out that Naveen and Megha were seeing each other, he pretended he does not know about it and discouraged Naveen from getting involved with:

> Girls from here. You have to be very careful, my friend […].
> Listen, the girl that you see at the uncle-and-aunty party or at the
> temple is not the same girl you see at the clubs. See, I grew up
> here. They're way too much to handle and – maybe I'm old-
> fashioned – I just can't imagine marrying a girl who used to sleep
> around.

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Here, Bobby has created an Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002). "You have to be very careful, my friend." By "girls from here," Bobby meant Indian-American females, specifically second-generation Indian American females; Indian-American females are the Them (Ramirez Berg, 2002); "[t]hey're way too much to handle." Bobby emphasized the supposed difference and division by telling Naveen that he himself was interested in marrying a woman from India rather than an Indian-American girl as he was "not ready for any shock. I think I know them – a little too much." Again, the Them here is referring to Indian-American women, and the Us (Ramirez Berg, 2002), fashioned by Bobby, is comprised of himself and Naveen.

Bobby also cultivated fear in Megha's parents by creating an Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002). He explained what happens to the visas of IT consultants from India when they are laid off or are still waiting around for a project. "It's a bad situation, but then again, it is really funny what these guys would do in order to hang around." He then pretended he did not know about Naveen and Megha and gave Naveen as an example of one of "these guys" – that is, one of Them. He lied and said Naveen already had a wife back in India and that "his friends are telling me that he's kind of getting married to someone local so his status can be 'maintained.'" Through this lie, Bobby crafted an Us-Them boundary with the Us comprised of Indian Americans – those born and raised in and those settled in America – and the Them consisting of IT consultants whose visas were about to expire, or in Bobby's words, "these guys" – in other words, Them (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

RQ4 asked: in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? The qualitative analysis found that second-generation Indian American, Rushmi, who goes by the name of Rush, was another character that employed the Us-Them demarcation. Rush was Megha's overly made-up friend and wanted to be a "Bollywood" star despite her incorrect Hindi, bringing to mind stereotypical Indian characters residing outside India in Hindi films such as *Kaho Naa… Pyaar Hai* (2000). The viewer was first introduced to Rush, as she faced the bathroom mirror and pretended to accept an award for her acting. Rush was wearing a tight, cropped black halter top with spaghetti straps and tight red pants, recalling stereotypical wardrobes of Indian-American women in *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back) (1999), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), and others. Her hair was in partial cornrows and she was wearing dangling earrings, a necklace, tight clothing, and heavy make-up, particulars all found in stereotypical images of Indian women residing abroad (particularly second-generation Indian-American women) in Hindi films, such as *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (1999) and *Jo Bole So Nihaal* (2005). While Rush dramatically gesticulated in front of the mirror, her mother wearily called out: "Again you've started with the acting?!" Rush's mother, who was from India, was clearly exasperated by her daughter's acting antics, and her one line coupled with the aural cue of dramatic award show background music, in addition to Rush's overdone ensemble rendered Rush a Buffoon (Ramirez Berg, 2002); she is Othered in the eyes of the audience (Ramirez Berg, 2002). All of these details are cues which, when presented together, form the stereotypical image (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

Rush was shown as having very strong opinions about "FOBs[73]" but had no qualms about getting an acting job in India. "FOBs? I'd rather be living single my whole life […] Come on, man. They're weird. I mean, they're culturally different […] I mean, look at the way they dress. So funny. FOBs are out, but Bollywood – that's a good idea." Perhaps Rush's preconceived notions about "FOBs" came from Hindi films; however, if the point of including this scene and dialogue was to show how easily and quickly stereotypes are formed from Hindi films, then it is not successful; in fact, it is paradoxical, as Rush's character itself is a stereotype. Part of the purpose of this scene was to address a particular stereotype, the stereotype of the "FOB." In this respect, the dialogue served this aim. Another goal of this scene and Megha's friendship with Rush, was to showcase Megha, the love interest of the hero of the film, Naveen. In juxtaposition with Megha, Rush became the Other, and Megha's standing became more solid. The film needed to prove to the viewer that Megha was qualified and worthy of Naveen as he was shown as virtually flawless and free of fault and blame, particularly in juxtaposition to Bobby and also as emphasized at the end of the film.

Also Othered in juxtaposition to Megha, was Alpesh, Megha's younger hip-hop immersed brother, who preferred to be called Al, a name that connoted that he was "westernized" and "all-American." Like Rush, Al fits the Hindi film stereotype of the Buffoon. His character was more than an annoying younger brother; Al served as a cultural Other to be juxtaposed against Megha. Al was introduced wearing baggy clothes, a baseball cap (worn backwards), gold chain, red bandana, and headphones.

[73] FOB stands for Fresh Off the Boat; this is a term that is utilized within a variety of ethnic communities in America to refer to recent immigrants.

Megha, on the other hand, was shown wearing conventional clothing. Like Rush, Al was put down by his parents; as he tried to freestyle rap, his father sarcastically said: "you American poet." Both Al and Rush served as the "Other" to make Megha look normal; however, it is important to note that this was not done with Naveen's roommates to make Naveen look normal. This is the difference between subverting generalizations and just stereotyping. These three Indian-American characters made Indian American Megha look good, positive, and normal, but more importantly, atypical, like an exception, and therefore, worthy of Indian Naveen. Naveen's roommates did not serve as Others in order to render Naveen normal; rather, they enhanced the image of Indians coming to America on work visas. These depictions of Indian Americans adhered to, and consequently transmitted, Hindi film stereotypes of Indian Americans, such as the Culturally Inept (Rush), the Buffoon (Al and Rush), and the Evil Indian residing abroad (NRI) (Bobby).

Green Card Fever (2003)

Plot summary: A love story between Murali, a young Indian with hopes to fulfill his dreams in America, and second-generation Indian American, Bharathi, a young woman whose parents are trying to fix an arranged marriage for her, although she has a white boyfriend. Second-generation Indian-American immigration attorney Om (who is dating a white woman and is referred to by Murali as "unfit to be an Indian"), is encouraged by his grandfather to take on pro bono work for illegal immigrants tangled in a corrupt system. Primarily, the film focuses on Murali, his hardships, and the immigration system.

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Like *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003), *Green Card Fever* (2003), was a film that centered on the story of a young Indian with hopes to fulfill his dreams in America and, like *IFIAW* (2003), also featured a romantic storyline between an Indian immigrant who was new to America, Murali (Vikram Dasu), and an American-born Indian (second-generation Indian American), Bharathi (Purva Bedi). Primarily, *Green Card Fever* (2003) focused on Murali and the immigration system. In his writer/director's notes for *Green Card Fever* (2003), Bala Rajasekharuni said, "Apart from dealing with the corrupt immigration system in the US, Green Card Fever also exposes the racial biases that are prevalent in the US, and the identity issues that haunt the first and second generation immigrants" (www.idlebrain.com/news/2000march20/greencardfever.com). Although given peripherally, some time and attention was allotted to second-generation Indian-American characters in this film: Bharati, a young woman whose parents were trying to fix an arranged marriage for her, and Omjeet Singh Purewal (Deep Katdare), a young immigration attorney whose grandfather encouraged him to take on pro bono work for illegal immigrants tangled in a corrupt system.

RQ5 asked: how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? The qualitative study examined *Green Card Fever*'s portrayal of second-generation Indian-American character, Bharathi. Bharathi was a young hard-working Indian-American woman who had three part-time jobs, attended college, and had a white boyfriend named

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Aaron. At his birthday party, Bharathi was helping herself to the buffet when a Caucasian friend of Aaron said, "Uh. You use a fork? I hear you guys are good at using your hands." This is an example of out-group stereotyping (Ramirez Berg, 2002); a member of the dominant group, in this case, the dominant race, White. The phrase "you guys" was referring to the non-dominant race, that is, people who are Indian; "you guys" was simply another term for Them in the Us-Them dichotomy (Ramirez Berg, 2002). When Bharathi responded that she did not like to get food on her hands, Aaron replied, "Yeah, but people from her home country, they're really skilled at that," to which a Caucasian woman inquired, "Isn't it messy? How do they do it?" Aaron added, "You know what's really cool? They ride elephants in India," to which members of the dominant race responded with "wows" and "reallys." And finally, after Aaron was given a copy of the *Kama Sutra* as a birthday gift, the topic of arranged marriage was brought up by Frank, another Caucasian friend of Aaron's: "You know, I hear you guys just look at people's pictures and then you marry them. How do you guys do that?" Again, in all of these patronizing statements, members of the dominant race reinforced the Us-Them boundary by using Them terminology (Ramirez Berg, 2002), in this case, Frank used "you guys" in addition to "them."

Upset by these comments, Bharathi biked over to Murali's place. Bharathi had first met Murali at a Telegu matchmaking event that her parents had forced her to attend. Recalling the sarcastic comments she made to keep Murali at a distance, she said:

> I have a question for you. It's like a kind of cross reference, you know
> what I mean? I'm just trying to understand something that happened

today. Remember when I asked you all those weird questions about oil in
your hair and toilet paper and eating with your hands? How did you feel?

Murali said he felt she was being "very respectful." Trying to get him to understand,

Bharathi tried again, "I mean it's not up to anyone to just ask you such personal

questions, right? It shows their prejudice. Their racial prejudice, you know, race," but

Murali thinks Bharathi was talking about race cars. This is an interesting dialogue as it

delineated the uniqueness of Bharathi's specific experience with members of the

dominant race as an Indian American as compared to Murali's experiences as an Indian

immigrant thus far. Also, it juxtaposed Bharati's seeming in-group stereotyping when

she met Murali with her personal encounter with out-group stereotyping by the dominant

group (Ramirez Berg, 2002). It seems, however, that Bharathi is somewhat alone in this

film when it comes to trying to get Indians from India to understand her perspective.

Murali's roommate Shibhav was also oblivious to what Bharathi was trying to convey as

he innocently joined in the conversation, "Race caaars. Very fast." A few scenes later,

Bharathi arrived at home and came across a young man sitting on the couch and a note

from her parents that read, "Be respectful to our guest. He is a very nice man. We'll be

back soon." When Bharathi argued with her parents for trying to arrange a marriage for

her with someone from the Telegu conference, her parents explained why they dismissed

her first boyfriend, "But he was black […] lower-caste." Bharathi replies, "What caste

are *we* in this country, dad?" This was another significant, but ephemeral, dialogue that

emphasized the distinctiveness of growing up, albeit a fractional segment of growing up,

not only as a racial minority, but specifically an Indian American in the United States; it

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was also an excellent example of the varying levels of self-awareness and cultural awareness between people of Indian ethnicity.

Another example of tension between generations due to an Indian American dating a member of another race occurred in a dialogue between second-generation Indian-American Om and his grandfather, an acutely socially conscious advocate for minorities in America. Om referred to Murali as an example of "one of these desi[74] idiots" because Murali tried to acquire his legal services with fake certificates and offered to pay him under the table. Obviously offended by the phrase, Om's father left the table.

Om:	*"What did I say?*
Grandfather:	*Maybe he means: you're also one of those desi idiots.*
Om:	*[Scoffs.] Me? A desi idiot?*
Grandfather:	*So what, you have a white girlfriend? Her race is not sexually transmitted to you. So, are you going to take a file or not?*
Om:	*No. Dada, if you want my free services, you have to show me some worthwhile cases ok?*

[Kisses his Grandfather on head. Grandfather playfully pats him on shoulder.]

In this dialogue, two main issues were being addressed: interracial dating and its interpretations by different generations and marginalization by in-group members (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

Om was a hard-working and candid attorney who was presented with the "highest honor in immigration law" by the Asian Bar Association "for the great honesty and

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[74] *Desi* is a Hindi word that means "of one's country;" in this case, it means Indian.

integrity he has shown in his law practice," but when Om refused to help Murali because

of Murali's fake documents, Murali told his roommate Shibhav, "He's too

straightforward, bhay [brother]. Bohut dartha [Very scared]. No guts. Unfit to be an

Indian." Without explicitly using the Us-Them terminology, Murali had nonetheless

made up his mind about Om and had drawn the Us-Them boundary by calling Om "unfit

to be an Indian" (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Om's grandfather also seemed to hold a similar

perspective as their opposing views finally escalated into an argument.

Grandfather:	*You can fight this case in federal court for a century.*
Om:	*I don't have that kind of time.*
Grandfather:	*Time! Worth killing twenty immigrants for.*
Om:	*You guys never change. You come to this country looking for a better life and you exploit every little thing there is about America. But you continue to call yourselves immigrants. You live as an immigrant; you die as an immigrant! Never an American, right?!*

[starts to walk away].

Grandfather:	*Sneak away! Go! If you can't beat them, join them. Go, make a deal with Chan. Dump those twenty bodies in hell. Practicality. In the good old days, we didn't know the meaning of the word. I remember your father being dragged in the streets by his hair. Kicked out of every job just because he was different. He didn't sneak away like you. He didn't cut his hair to join the majority. Let me tell you something, Om. You are not one of us. You are not one of us.*

[Turns around and leaves. Soft music.]

The Us-Them concept flips here (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Om used the popular "you guys"

phrase to refer to immigrants, a category which included his grandfather, thus prompting

his grandfather, Dada, to rejoin. It was at this point that Om's grandfather clarified his

model of the Us-Them demarcation (Ramirez Berg, 2002). "If you can't beat them, join

them." It was clear to the viewer, having become well-acquainted with Dada's socio-

political views, that *them* was the system run by corrupt, greedy crooks, such as Chan.

Dada also brought up the racism that Om's father had to face because he was Sikh, (and

therefore, had a beard and moustache and wore a turban.) Dada's comparison between

Om's father and Om was telling; he said, "He didn't sneak away like you. He didn't cut

his hair to join the majority." Like his own son (Om's father), Dada also did not cut his

hair and shave his beard. The *Us* in this equation, as fashioned by Dada, was comprised

generally of the dissent, the minority, and here specifically, himself and Om's father, his

son. Om was clean-shaven, had short hair, and did not wear a turban; he was bluntly

told, "You are not one of us. You are not one of *us*." Like Bharathi, Om felt and was

isolated from his nuclear family, in which he may have periodically been an "Other."

Both Dada's and Om's perspectives were easily accessible to the audience, allowing for

the viewer to choose a position if desired. Interesting to note is that because Om's father

and grandfather grew up during a different time than Om did, there was a conflict

between Dada and Om; not only was it an ideological one, but it was also a generational

conflict. Om not wearing the trappings of a Sikh, however, was portrayed as a cultural

conflict with his grandfather, who felt very strongly about it.

RQ4 in this study asked: in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and

culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films?

Dada's stern statement to Om that, "You are not one of us" is somewhat reminiscent of a

dialogue in *Pardes* (Foreign Country) (1997) in which the father yelled at his second-generation Indian-American son while visiting India, "Get lost and go back to America!" The portrayal of Om filled the Hindi film stereotype of the Westernized Indian. The qualitative analysis of this film found another noteworthy part of Om's storyline; at the end of the film, Om transformed himself and changed his cultural standing by donning a turban. This event recalled Hindi film stereotypes of the Transformed Indian residing outside India. At the end of the film, the cultural misfit of an "NRI" was successfully converted by the "true Indians" or as Murali called himself in this film, "original Indian."

The spotlight of this film shines on Murali, his quest for a green card, and the hardships Indian immigrants face according to Rajasekharuni, his seven years of residency in the United States, and six months of research, as mentioned in his writer/director's notes (www.idlebrain.com/news/2000march20/greencardfever.com). The film is melodramatic at times, sometimes understandably, sometimes not. The political messages of the film are brazenly clear. It is obvious that Rajasekharuni had an agenda and hoped that his film would serve as a warning to illegal immigrants to the United States, as confirmed by his notes; in this respect, *Green Card Fever* (2003) is somewhat didactic. This quality coupled with the film's tendency to oversimplify, renders the film a somewhat moralizing melodrama.

RQ4 asked: in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Rajasekharuni indeed brought to the table stereotypes that were adopted by some members of the dominant group in America and in Hollywood films like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*

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(1984). It was also refreshing to see a film that focused on Indian immigrants and did not villainize the Indian-American youth, although the first generation was not entirely excluded as the villain is Parvesh (Kaaizad Kotwal), a character that fulfills the Hindi film stereotype of the Evil Indian residing outside Indian (NRI). In an interview, Rajasekharuni said that he was determined to portray the "identity issues that haunt the first and second generation immigrants" (www.idlebrain.com/news/2000march20/greencardfever.com), an intention that would have been best fulfilled had Rajasekharuni decidedly given more time to the second-generation and other Indian-American characters and their families, particularly Bharathi's storyline at the very least, considering she was Murali's love interest. Instead, the questions a viewer may have had regarding the second-generation Indian-American characters were hurriedly and clumsily answered like in *Wings of Hope*, thereby rendering the attempt deficient (e.g.: *ABCD*; *Wings of Hope*; *Indian Fish In American Waters*), the "issues" somewhat marginal, and the Indian-American characters marginalized (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

Flavors (2004)

Plot summary: Depictions of the lives of multiple Indians working in the IT (Information Technology) industry in America. This variety of characters provides for depth and dimension of Indian immigrants, ranging from visiting parents who are meeting their future white daughter-in-law for the first time to assimilated Candy, whose missing accent baffles her unemployed roommates, referred to as "The Bench Crowd."

In stark contrast to these dramas is the film comedy *Flavors* (2004), a refreshing and vivid depiction of the lives of multiple Indians working in the IT (Information

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Technology) industry in America. This film has received stellar reviews in America as well as India. Receiving rave reviews from publications ranging from *Reel World* to *St. Louis Today* to *Indian Express*, *Flavors* (2004) may have earned such positive feedback because it *only* portrays Indians from India. The writers/directors choose one diverse group, and consequently, portray it well. This is not to say that the depiction of diversity is non-existent; in fact, the viewer is taken through a fluid, meandering mini-journey through approximately a dozen characters' lives and is surprisingly satisfied, yet puzzlingly left wanting more.

The viewer was presented with slice after slice of the lives of a variety of Indian characters, from Kartik and Rachna who were introduced by title as "Friends or something like it" to Sangita whose title read "Married but single;" also included were Candy, who was introduced as the "man of the house," in which Jas, Vivek, and Ashok also reside and who were referred to as "The Bench Crowd." Kartik and Rachna had an east coast/west coast friendship, a situation which led to episodic but continuing telephone conversations that were comprised of telling each other everything from the significant to the silly. Sangita was married to Nikhil, who after working at a company for five years, was laid off and had been searching for a job while keeping all this from his wife, Sangita, who was stuck in a routine of cleaning an already spotless home, watching insipid television shows, and listening to the random solicitors at the front door of her suburban house. Candy was a hard-working, practical member of the IT industry and possibly the only character without an Indian accent which puzzled her roommates since she had been living in America for 10 years. Candy tried to manage her lazy and

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jobless roommates, Jas and Ashok, who watched everything on television, hardly cleaned up after themselves, and fleetingly contemplated making a film about the lives of Indians in the IT industry but toss the idea because they do not think anyone would be interested in watching such nonsense – a satirical wink at the audience and possibly a passing commentary on previous films made by Indian immigrants with IT and engineering backgrounds.

RQ5 asked: how are Indian Americans representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? A significant part of what makes this film a success is that depth and dimension were given to the main characters, who consequently provided for an entertaining array of stories for the viewer to believe in and therefore enjoy. This is not to say that stereotypical characters were not found in this film; however, they were given significantly less screen time than the main characters, and their representation was clearly included for comedic value as familiar "inside jokes." The reason these depictions worked and were not offensive is because first, they were not given excessive screen time and second, these characters were, in some way or another, confronted for being stereotypes. They were purposely placed in this film, served a function, given no more attention than deserved, and were not degrading or placed there for any political agenda, all the while providing entertainment through familiarity.

The qualitative research found examples of such familiarity when answering RQ4, which asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? One example was of

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the character, Vivek. Vivek was a lovesick fool whose condition was exacerbated by

Hindi films and other media. He stared at the screen and repeated, "Only when you love,

you live. You need to love to live. SRK (Shah Rukh Khan) from *Darr*."[75] Vivek was

mocked by his comrades, given sympathy by Candy's girlfriends, and scolded by Candy

for next "falling in love" with her. "Why are you saying my name so many times? Oh

my God. Is there anything common between us? Overnight, you're in love all over

again? Listen to yourself. Grow up." Randy Sandy was another peripheral character

who started playing golf with his boss and got the manager position. When his friend

inquired about the reason for champagne, Randy nonchalantly replied, "I'm a bachelor

again. She went back to India." A scenario like this is treated with great drama in Hindi

films and inevitably culminates in the derision and expulsion or the transformation of the

Indian residing abroad. *Flavors*, however, spends merely a few seconds; it is not that the

topic is not weighty, but rather that the film is staying true to its genre: comedy. Also, it

can be argued that since some Hindi films have allotted so much time to such themes,

Flavors simply decided not to rehash the stereotypical storyline.

In this film, two relationships touched upon subject matter mentioned in previous

Indian-American immigrant films: interracial relationships and arranged marriage.

Unlike *ABCD* (1999) and *Green Card Fever* (2003), however, *Flavors* did not address

these topics with any fracas or looming and impending consequences. For example,

Indian character Brad Gopalkrishna was engaged to Jenny, a Caucasian woman, who was

about to meet Mr. and Mrs. Gopalkrishna, introduced earlier to the viewer as "The

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[75] The title of this Hindi film *Darr* (1993) means fear.

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Visitors." Mr. and Mrs. Gopalkrishna were endearing parents who were not sure how to react and communicate with their future daughter-in-law. Brad's father enjoyed wearing T-shirts and shorts, calling it his "walking dress" and was shown saying hello to everyone he came across on his daily walk because his impression was that people in America were friendly and always greeted each other. When they met Jenny, it was comically awkward for them as she hugged them as opposed to folding her hands and bowing and touching their feet in respect. Brad's parents gave Jenny a necklace that was a family heirloom refashioned for her to wear on her wedding day and then attempted to give Jenny something sweet to eat to bless the happy occasion. She politely refused and said she was trying to watch her weight, which perplexed the Gopalkrishnas to no end. This cultural juxtaposition was amusing, yet informative of the cultural differences, to the audience. No one was intentionally disrespectful or offended, just constantly puzzled and awkward. It was simply an appropriate, and again believable, approach to the subject matter.

Another peripheral character was Ramana, a potential mate for Rachna, whom Rachna first met at her aunt's home. The conversation between them was understandably awkward, with Rachna's aunt introducing Ramana with a few facts including how much money he made and Rachna talking about her "interests and hobbies,"[76] such as her long-ago abandoned hobby of collecting things. Rachna wondered what the hurry was since she was only 25 years old. "You're not getting any younger," replied her encouraging and hopeful aunt. When Rachna flew out to the east coast for one day to meet Ramana at

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[76] This is an inside joke for members of the Indian-American community as this phrase is commonly used in such scenarios.

a local restaurant called Flavors, Kartik repeatedly interrupted them by calling her cellphone. He later showed up at the restaurant, sat at a table behind Ramana, and mocked Ramana's answers. *Flavors* addresses a commonly portrayed issue with humor, ease, and a level of normality that renders the subject natural and therefore, does not Other as done in other films examined in this study. This approach also does not alienate audience members as it presents the situation as what it really is – simply a well-intentioned set-up by family members as opposed to the appalling set-up for Pooja by her brother and sister-in-law in the Hindi film *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come Let's Go Back) (1997), in which Pooja's Indian-American brother tried to force her to marry his boss so he can get a promotion at work.[77]

Flavors (2004) has humor, friendship, a budding romance, problems with believable resolutions, and of course, a wedding. It stays true to its identity without reaching the point of over-saturation and allows the viewer to simply watch and enjoy the diverse roles play out a portion of their believable lives. In this film, there is not any drama, melodrama, gross misrepresentations or over-simplifications; it just provides a few glimpses into the lives of a small group of people who are Indian and in the IT industry – a film with the simple aim to tell the audience a few interwoven stories.

The following chapter will resume the qualitative analysis of Indian-American films with particular attention given to second-generation Indian-American films. The analysis will continue answering RQ3: How are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film?

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[77] Pooja's brother and his Indian-American wife immediately disown Pooja and kick her out of their home within minutes of her first visit (on a one-way ticket as arranged by her brother) to America.

and RQ4: In terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? The chapter will concentrate on second-generation Indian-American films to further investigate RQ5: How are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?

CHAPTER 8: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INDIAN-AMERICAN FILMS

(Continued)

As demonstrated thus far in the qualitative analysis of Indian-American films, Indian-American immigrant films have not only demonstrated that they are diverse in terms of storylines, but they also showcase the diversity of the Indian community in the United States. The qualitative analysis of second-generation Indian-American films will continue answering the following research questions: RQ3, which asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? and RQ4: In terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? This portion of the qualitative analysis will concentrate on second-generation Indian-American films to further investigate RQ5: How are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? Before delving into the qualitative analysis of second-generation Indian-American films, however, the researcher has provided brief plot summaries of the films in the following table to help familiarize the reader with each unique story (see Table 16).

Table 16

Plot Summaries for Second-Generation Indian-American Films

Title of Film	**Plot Summary**
Chutney Popcorn (1999)	Reena is a second-generation Indian-American struggling photographer who does *mehndi* and takes pictures of these designs as body art although she is unaware of Indian culture. Upon finding out that her married older sister is unable to conceive, Reena volunteers to be a surrogate mother. Both Reena's mother and sister are resistant to the idea at first because of Reena's career choice, overall flaky nature, and sexual preference; Reena is gay and has a white girlfriend. Although Reena finds herself alone for a while and pregnant, eventually, family and friends reunite and Reena has the baby.
American Desi (2001)	Inspired by Pandya's own college life at Rutgers University, this story focuses on Kris(hna), who cannot wait to leave his home for college only to find out that his college roommates are all Indian. When Kris becomes interested in a young woman named Nina, he is speechless when he finds out that she is Indian. In an effort to win her over, Kris begins to take interest in Indian culture but struggles initially. Introspection and self-realization motivate Kris to learn more about Indian culture through his roommates, and Kris and Nina are united at the end of the film.
American Chai (2002)	Sureel is a senior in college and for four years has successfully managed to keep his real major a secret from his parents. They believe he is pre-med, single, and bound for medical school and an arranged marriage; in reality, he is actually a music major and in a band, has a white girlfriend, and plans to pursue music after he graduates. He becomes interested in a young Indian-American woman that he sees performing a solo dance to Indian and American music. Also interested in fusion, Sureel is inspired by Maya, and their relationship

	develops. Eventually, Sureel confronts his father and confesses his dream to pursue music. Sureel's mother and brother attend the concert to support him in the battle of the bands and ultimately, so does his father. With his father's blessing, Sureel follows his musical path to England where he will reunite with Maya who followed her dream to pursue dance.
Where's the Party, Yaar? (2003) *(Dude, Where's the Party?)*	This film explores the brotherhood between Indian immigrant, Hari, and second-generation Indian American, Mo(han), whose fathers were close back in India. Mo is a popular party promoter on his college campus. Because of their fathers' close bond, however, Mo(han) is expected to take Hari under his wing, but this poses a problem for party promoter Mo as he has been instructed by his boss to keep the location of the biggest party on campus a secret and the list of guests exclusive. Mo quickly discovers how little he and Hari seem to have in common but still manages to learn from Hari and eventually bond with him. Multiple subplots of this film accentuate the diversity found throughout Indian and Indian-American groups.
Ball and Chain (2004) *(Arrangement)*	This film begins with a few unfortunate encounters between Indian Americans Ameet and Saima, who immediately take a disliking to each other; both sets of their parents, however, believe the two are a match made in heaven. The only things they have in common are their distaste for each other and their willingness to go to any lengths to get their parents to break off the arranged engagement. Having successfully executed their plan, they soon find themselves in love with each other and trying to convince Saima's parents that it was all a hoax.

Analysis of Films by Second-Generation Indian Americans

Chutney Popcorn (1999)

Plot summary: Reena is a second-generation Indian-American struggling photographer who does *mehndi* on people and takes pictures of these designs as body art although she is unaware of Indian culture. Upon finding out that her married older sister is unable to

conceive, Reena volunteers to be a surrogate mother. Both Reena's mother and sister are resistant to the idea at first because of Reena's career choice, overall flaky nature, and sexual preference; Reena is gay and has a white girlfriend. Although Reena finds herself alone and pregnant, eventually, family and friends reunite, and Reena has the baby.

The first second-generation Indian-American film that portrays Indian Americans and more importantly, second-generation Indian Americans (American-born Indians) and ideas of cultural fusion may be Nisha Ganatra's independent film *Chutney Popcorn* (1999). In an interview with *AsiaSource*, Ganatra talked about the South Asian-American community's reaction to her *Chutney Popcorn*:

> It's been very supportive and really great. I was told that we were the first film to represent the Indian-American experience. A film about the generation that was born and raised here that's not about missing India and about missing the UK, but about what's going on here and how our identities have formed... I'm glad the community is being so supportive. I was worried about the gay theme but it's given me a lot of faith in our community that it hasn't been an issue (www.asiasource.org/arts/Nisha.cfm).

In this film, Reena (Nisha Ganatra), is a struggling photographer who volunteers to be a surrogate mother for her married older sister, who is unable to conceive. The family is resistant to the idea at first because of Reena's career choice and sexual preference. *Chutney Popcorn* (1999) is a complicated and intricate film that delves into some issues while briefly touching upon others. RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? One of the first cultural topics briefly illustrated in this film was cultural identity through

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one's name. At the reception for Reena's sister's wedding, a young woman asked a girl about her name:

White girl:	*What's your name?*
Indian-American girl:	*Monica.*
White girl:	*No, what's your real name?*
Indian-American girl:	*Monica.*
White girl:	*Don't you have an Indian name?*

[An old woman calls Monica by her name.]

With this dialogue, *Chutney Popcorn* became the first Indian-American film to address the use of Western names in Indian culture. Although it did not resolve the confusion for the White girl and perhaps some audience members, by including this dialogue, *Chutney Popcorn* provided its Indian and Indian-American viewers with a cultural morsel that added to *Chutney Popcorn*'s salience as an Indian-American film primarily for the Indian-American audience.

RQ5 of this study asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? Throughout this film, the analysis found examples of Reena's issues and discomfort with Indian culture. At the reception, when a woman tried to get Reena to join in the Indian dancing, she said, "Come on, Reena. You have Punjabi blood in you, you know? Come on, let's dance." When Reena asked her mother, "Mom, Mom, are we Punjabi?" Her

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mother replied with exasperation and frustration, "You know absolutely nothing!" Reena described how she felt wearing Indian clothing to her Caucasian girlfriend, "It's like I feel like I'm in drag." This polysemic, or open, statement (Hall, 1992) had multiple meanings; clearly, Reena felt as though she was in a costume. For Reena, such trappings embodied a culture with which she had no connection. The scene the audience observed through Reena's eyes turned to slow motion and American music narrated the scene. This vantage point coupled with the Western music plainly conveyed Reena's discomfort not only with Indian clothing, but Indian dancing, Indian music, and perhaps more.

RQ5 was answered further by the many scenes of Reena's disconnection with Indian culture were shown during the first half of the film. For her photography, Reena applies *mehndi* to a customer who asked if that was how it was done in India to which Reena replied with a clearly uncertain, "Sure." One of Reena's friends asked what Bengali food was and Reena replied that Bengali food was food from Bangladesh. (Bengali food is food from the state of Bengal in India. Bangladesh is a country adjacent to India.) During a *pooja* (worship) ceremony, Reena's mother and sister covered their heads with *dupattas*[78] while Reena put on a baseball cap backwards after being scolded by her mother (Madhur Jaffrey) [79] for not covering her head. Another example of Reena's ignorance of Indian culture was when her mother asked her to pick up some *haldi* (turmeric), and she asked, "The yellow one?" "Yes!" her mother yelled, "The yellow one is haldi!" These last two scenes, as well as the aforementioned scene of

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[78] A *dupatta* is a long piece of cloth that is normally a part of a 3-piece Indian ensemble worn by women.
[79] In fact, Madhur Jaffrey played the mother in both films.

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Reena at her sister's reception, demonstrated Reena's everyday conflicts with her mother, and her issues and cultural state, in addition to how she was Othered by her mother.

Also explored in this film was the generational conflict between mother and daughter in a somewhat similar manner as found in *ABCD* (1999). The mother's definition of success in life consisted of living a comfortable family life married and with children. Reena was regarded by her mother in particular as someone who could not meet the requirements of this formula because she was a lesbian with aspirations of becoming a published and recognized photographer. According to her mother, Reena could not have children if she was lesbian and could not lead a successful family life by pursuing photography as the field is unstable and unreliable as a means to achieve security and success in life. "Reena, you're not even in those pictures. How can anyone know that it's my daughter's picture? Hmmm? Besides, what kind of a field is it anyway? No stability – jumping from one place to another place." As in other Indian-American films, such as *Wings of Hope* (2001), and as we will see later in *American Desi* (2001) and *American Chai* (2002), the hopes of Indian-American characters to pursue careers in the arts are regarded by immigrant Indian parents as frivolous and even irresponsible, particularly because the concern of the parents is for their children to achieve financial stability in life.

One of the off-putting features of *Chutney Popcorn* (1999) is how ignorant and unaware Reena was of Indian culture. At times, it distracted the viewer from the storyline. This is not to say that ignorance does not exist; however, the extent of her ignorance was simply not believably executed as was also sometimes the case with

Reena's mother about other matters. If this was deliberately done so as not to pigeonhole the film as solely about an Indian-American family, the concept does not function well. RQ3 asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? The fusion of Indian and American as illustrated in this film can be interpreted as the film's form of or the director's version of "Indian-Americanness" (Bacon, 1999). While Reena did not know the traditional designs of *mehndi* in India and did not apply *mehndi* in the traditional Indian manner (on people's hands), she took *mehndi* as a visual art, a medium, which she applied to different parts of people's bodies and photographs her work; it can be argued that this was a blending of east and west. When Reena was scolded by her mother to cover her head (out of respect) during the *pooja* (worship), Reena covered her head, not with the traditional Indian *dupatta*, but rather with a baseball cap (and that too worn backwards); this can also be interpreted as a form of fusion of the Indian and the American. Lastly, an important scene showed even the mother participating in a form of cultural fusion. During a traditional Indian ceremony in which prayers were conducted for the pregnant mother and baby, Reena's mother initially struggled with how to "arrange" the placement of Reena who was the surrogate mother, Reena's girlfriend, Reena's married sister who was to be the adoptive mother, and her husband who was the biological father. Eventually, Reena's mother successfully "placed" everyone, and the audience was provided with a visual frame of an Indian-American family following Indian tradition within an American setting.

The originality of the story of *Chutney Popcorn* cannot conceal the signs of it being a first-time experience for many of those involved in its production; nevertheless, Ganatra has indeed succeeded in making a unique film in many respects. *Chutney Popcorn* (1999) is the first Indian-American film to do many things: focus on a second-generation Indian American, have a female as the protagonist, address sexual orientation, portray fusion of the Indian and American cultures through multiple avenues, ranging from traditional ceremonies to art, and employ a cast comprised almost entirely of females. Although rough on the edges, it is an open text that allows for polysemy (Hall, 1992) and has clearly been appreciated for this as it has been recognized in numerous film festivals and has received many awards, including two audience awards, one for second place at the Berlin Film Festival and the other at the Newport Film Festival (www.aczoom.com/nisha/chutneypopcorn/). *Chutney Popcorn* (1999) won the Best of Festival Award and Best Narrative Feature at the Ojai Film Festival and also earned the awards of Best Feature Film at the Los Angles Outfest Film Festival and the San Francisco Film Festival, as well as the Best Feature Film Audience Award at the Madrid International Film Festival and the Best Feature Film Public Award at the Paris International Film Festival (www.aczoom.com/nisha/chutneypopcorn/). In fact, even in her interviews, Ganatra was easily able to make appeal for the salience of the film to various communities as demonstrated in interviews with *Eye Weekly*, *AsiaSource*, and *India West*.

In *Toronto Star*'s division, *Eye Weekly*, Ganatra explains one of her main objectives when making this film:

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> That was a really important goal: to not make a film about being gay or lesbian, and to not make a film about the Indian-American experience […] In Chutney Popcorn, it's like, 'Here's a movie, and this character just happens to be gay, and this family just happens to be Indian, but it's not really about that' (August 24, 2000).

Clearly, Ganatra was striving to emphasize that her film is one that cuts across diverse audiences and not simply a film for two specific audiences (AsiaSource, 2000). Beyond the Indian-American audience, which through the historical background and the analysis of Indian-American films thus far is clarified as diverse, are many other audiences, one of which Ganatra is categorizing as the South Asian audience. Ganatra is quoted in *India West*: "There hasn't been a film like this before […] We're looking for a distributor, but some of them have said there's no audience for this kind of film." Tsering reports, "If a sizable enough Indian American audience shows up to the screenings, [according to distributors], she'd have a shot at some funding" (members.tripod.com/~LisaTsering/chutney.html). That distributors do not think there are audiences for such films, Indian-American films, coupled with the scant representation of second-generation Indian Americans in Hollywood films verifies the significance of Indian-American films, particularly second-generation Indian-American films, and their representations as transmission of culture.

American Desi (2001)

Plot summary: Inspired by Pandya's own college life at Rutgers University, this story focuses on Kris (Krishna), who cannot wait to leave his home for college only to find out that his college roommates are all Indian. When Kris becomes interested in a young woman named Nina, he is speechless when he finds out that she is Indian. In an effort to win her over, Kris begins to take interest in Indian culture but struggles initially.

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Introspection and self-realization motivate Kris to learn more about Indian culture through his roommates and Kris and Nina are united at the end of the film.

American Desi (2001) proclaims itself as "the first feature film to tell the story of Indian-American college students growing up in the United States" (www.americandesimovie.com). This may be due in part to the fact that *American Desi* is classified as having been produced for a general Indian-American audience as opposed to *ABCD* (1999), a film which was produced from a more artistic point of view. *American Desi* (2001) was heavily advertised in weekly half-hour Indian-American television shows and the Indian-American newspaper, *India West*. *American Desi* is also described as "the first English-language film released by Eros Entertainment which is a leading distributor of Hindi-language movies from India" (www.asianamericanfilm.com).

On Friday, March 16, 2001, *American Desi* was released in six theaters in California (northern and southern), four theaters in New Jersey, five theaters in New York, four theaters in Texas, and in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington. In Canada, it was released in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta as well (www.asianamericanfilm.com). To date, *American Desi* was shown in more theaters than *ABCD* and *Where's the Party, Yaar?* combined. This may in part be due to the fact that *American Desi* is a comedy about Indian-American youth in college while *ABCD* is a drama about working Indian-American adults in their mid to late 20's. "Sold out shows [for *American Desi*] were reported in all major markets including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto, San Francisco, Boston, and Houston" (www.asianamericanfilm.com). This source also notes

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the results of exit polls: *American Desi* audiences were divided equally in terms of male and female viewers; the poll also reported that 53% of viewers of *American Desi* were 25 years of age (www.asianamericanfilm.com) indicating its salience to the Indian-American youth.

Highly receptive to *American Desi* were Indian-American audiences across America as demonstrated by the estimated $310,000 (www.rediff.com) grossed within the film's first three days. According to this source, "Most weekend shows were sold out in Toronto, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles" (www.rediff.com). Even one of the actors in the film reportedly was not able to get any tickets for the Manhattan show (www.rediff.com). When he finally did see the film, he noticed that "it was the younger members in the crowd who were doing all the laughing. 'Older people and critics spent all their time analyzing the movie, while the college crowd was completely cracking up'" (www.rediff.com). This supports the idea that *American Desi*, though a film best understood by Indian Americans in general, is a film for the youth population within the marginal group of Indian Americans. As an enthusiastic writer/viewer says, "Finally, a film that has a realistic portrayal of NRIs[80] and their lives. *American Desi* is being touted as a landmark film… if this film is released in India, then the audience will finally see what NRI life is really like abroad. It shatters so many myths that people may have of the younger NRI generation" (www.planetbollywood.com). The "younger NRI generation" to which this viewer is referring includes second-generation Indian Americans. The

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[80] The term NRI or Non-Resident Indian is utilized by the Indian government and Indian film industry, particularly the Hindi film industry, to refer to a person of Indian origin that is residing anywhere outside India.

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viewer also says that: "Indian directors have the wrong idea. Subhash Ghai and Rishi Kapoor should take note, instead of making ignorant films like Pardes […] and Aa Ab Laut Chalen" (www.planetbollywood.com). RQ4 of this study asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? In the Hindi films, *Pardes* (Foreign Country) and *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back), were representations of second-generation Indian Americans, all of whom were categorized in the quantitative portion of this study as having been stereotyped as the Evil Indian residing outside India (NRI). The representations of second-generation Indian-Americans, or the "younger NRI generation" as this viewer said, in *American Desi* addressed some of the Hindi film stereotypes of Indian-Americans, particularly those of second-generation Indian Americans.

Written in 1990 by Piyush Dinker Pandya, *American Desi* (2001) was finally brought to (larger than) life on the silver screen eleven years later by Deep Katdare, the star of the film, and Gitesh and Piyush Dinker Pandya on a budget of $250,000. The script was inspired by Pandya's own college life at Rutgers University (Edison, New Jersey), which "gave him a sense of belonging, and idea of how to deal with fellow desis[81]" (*News India Times*, October 2002). Katdare said, "It was Piyush's own story, about a guy who is dying to get out of his Indian skin." Pandya added, "[W]henever mom and dad would be like 'Be Indian,' I was like 'Cut it out.' I would leave the room every time my dad played Hindi numbers, but suddenly Bollywood was cool. I was

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[81] *Desi* means "of one's country" and in this case, is a term for Indian.

definitely more receptive" (*News India Times*, October 2002). This supports the concept of how influential Hindi cinema is in the lives of Indians and Indian Americans as audience members and more importantly, Indian-American filmmakers.

In *American Desi* (2001), the male protagonist was an eighteen-year-old Indian American who goes by the name "Kris," an American-sounding shortened version derived from his given name, Krishna Gopal, also known as Lord Krishna, an Indian god. To help answer RQ3, which asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film?, this study analyzed visual elements and juxtapositions utilized in the film's introductory scenes. The film opened with a shot of a large American flag, numerous trophies and pictures of Kris and his high school baseball team. This scene, accompanied by rock music, was replete with signs that represented the All-American jock and connoted Kris as an All-American boy. The following introductory scenes used alternating signs that indicated the presence of American culture to signs that denote Indian culture, such as a foot in a *chapal* (Indian sandal). It is fairly obvious (to an Indian-American viewer) that the figure represented the head of the family – the father. The camera cut to the back of a young male wearing a baseball cap backwards and practicing his drumsticks in the air as he looked at a poster of a white American band posing in front of a backdrop of red and white stripes. The next shot was of Indian tea being made. (Loud rock music was still playing.) Instantly, the scene cut to a basketball being grabbed by the blue jeans-wearing Kris. The camera panned to photographs on his dresser – the first one of a white girl in a prom dress, the next one of Kris and his parents posing in front of the Taj Mahal, a very

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familiar photograph to many Indian-American viewers. The camera cut to a mise-en-scene of Kris' room, some more all-American symbols, and a clearer view of Kris, sporting his Penn University baseball cap (worn backwards), and his New York jersey and holding a football. Again, the camera cut to another close-up shot of the *chai* (Indian tea), and the camera zoomed out to show the father, who called out to his son in Hindi to come down for breakfast. The rock music faded completely.

The next scene cut to a close-up of Kris's mother performing a *pooja* (religious ceremony). As an Indian flute played a pious Indian melody and was accompanied by a sitar (an Indian classical instrument), the camera panned around the icons of a *pooja*: a *diya* (small oil lamp), incense, an image of Lord Krishna, flowers, and old photographs, and other religious icons form a montage – a stark contrast to Kris's All-American room. Kris's mother was then shown wearing a *sari* (Indian garment) and a *bindi* (dot traditionally symbolizing marriage) and bowing her covered head in devotion to an image of Lord Krishna, but this time the image was of the deity as a young boy, looking over his left shoulder. Immediately, the rock music chimed in and the camera cut to a shot of Kris(hna) looking over his left shoulder as he sifted through the top shelf of his closet. The superimposition of these two images and the layering of these two sounds served as the final and ultimate juxtaposition of two very different images, Lord Krishna, the Indian god, and Kris, the All-American boy. The superimposition also served as a foreshadowing of Kris eventually connecting with Indian culture and set the tone for the eventual blending of two cultures with visual icons of both the American and Indian cultures. This sequence also helps to begin answering RQ5, which asked, how are Indian

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Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?

Grouped together, as they were meant to be seen, these scenes reflected conflict and unity; they also represented Kris's rejection or acceptance of Indian culture. It was clear, however, that these alternating juxtapositions of American and Indian signs conveyed symbolic systems of two distinct cultures. This was done in a purposeful (and beautiful) manner not only to quickly relay two disparate cultures in a short period of time but also to emphasize Kris's blatant self-separation from his Indian culture. To further accentuate this self-imposed removal, an additional juxtaposition was introduced – Kris's white friend Eric. The character Eric served as a way for the viewer to gauge Kris's interest and knowledge of Indian culture. When Eric came to Kris's room so they could leave for college, Kris said, "Let's hurry up and get the hell out of here before my mom starts all that religious crap" [sics 'voodoo' movement with hands]. During the *aarti*[82], Eric smiled while Kris impatiently rolled his eyes. Eric initially forgot that he was wearing a *tikka*[83] while Kris immediately wiped it off before driving off to college. As one who was more curious than Kris about Indian culture, Eric liked the food, the smell of which Kris despised, and had no qualms about taking money (a form of blessing) from Indian elders. Whereas viewers may have suspected that Eric would be the one who found these Indian rituals alienating, such juxtapositions between Eric and Kris visually

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[82] *Aarti* is another word for *pooja*, meaning a Hindu ceremony or prayer.
[83] A *tikka* is red and made of a washable, paint-like substance that is applied (in a vertical line for males and a dot for females) to the middle of a person's forehead by another as a blessing in Hindu ceremonies.

relayed Kris' indifference towards Indian culture. In other words, Kris could not wait to move out of his Indian home – to him a marginalized space for the out-group, the Other – and into an American dorm, a mainstream space representing the center, the in-group (Ramirez Berg, 2002). He regarded his own home, a sphere embodying Indianness (visually and aurally), as abnormal and even foreign as connoted by his reactions to basic customs; he could not wait for the normalcy that American dorm life purportedly had to offer.

Kris's euphoric mood soon withered, however, when he found out that all three of his roommates were Indian, cooked Indian food, watched Indian films, spoke Indian languages, and performed Indian religious rituals. His roommates ranged from a Hindu Indian American, who embraced the philosophies of Malcolm X in addition to his Indian heritage, to two Indians, a Sikh and a Muslim, who both spoke with Indian accents. RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? With Kris's three roommates, in addition to a graduate student and teaching assistant, and several other Indian-American students, the viewer was presented with a variety of characters of Indian origin, including Indian and Indian American as well as second-generation Indian American. As the quantitative analysis showed, such diversity was not found in Hindi and in Hollywood films.

RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? In

this film, fleeting, tongue-in-cheek humor is utilized to highlight diversity and add comic relief for the members of the margin within the margin, in other words, for members of the subgroup within the subgroup (Ramirez Berg, 2002). One of Kris's roommates, Jagjit, was enrolled as an engineering major, but his artwork, often created during engineering lectures, demonstrated that his heart belongs in a different discipline altogether – art. Forced by his father to pursue engineering, Jagjit paid for his engineering books and art supplies separately so his father would not find out he still drew and painted. "What's up with the partition?" Ajay asked. "What are those – Pakistani brushes?" The use of such humor was very significant in bringing forth the salient features of Indian-American films, which emphasize unique attributes that thus far, Hindi and Hollywood films do not offer.

To help answer RQ4, which asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films?, additional scenes utilizing humor as acts of subversion were qualitatively analyzed. When a friend yelled for Jagjit who happened to be standing right behind him at a dance, Jagjit pointed to his turban, a noticeable sign of the Other (Hall, 1992; Ramirez Berg, 2002), and jokingly said, "I do have ears under this, you know." Having the subgroup character make a joke about his turban empowered the character and was thereby a subversive act of self-expression that also broke the Hollywood stereotype of the Socially Inept Indian. Humor was also used to delineate typical differences – obvious and subtle – among second-generation (America-born) Indians and Indian immigrants. For example, on their way to lunch, Ajay playfully mocked Jagjit's accent while Jagjit

scowled at him, and Jagjit and Salim teased Ajay about his slang use, taste in music, and penchant for all things hip-hop. Such banter was not offensive, however, because it was playful and most importantly, served to establish the understanding and unity that the brotherly characters have among each other despite their differences.

RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? An additional way Hindi and Hollywood stereotypes were tackled in this film was by illustrating characters' multiculturalism and versatility. For example, the film showed Ajay breaking into hip-hop dance moves, but it also showed him doing *bhangra* (folk dance)[84] and *dandia* (folk dance)[85]. In some scenes he wore baggy hip-hop clothes, and in another he was wearing a t-shirt with an image of Lord Krishna on it – not to mention a disdainful look on his face when Kris told the professor that he preferred to be called Kris and not Krishna. The character Jagjit also exhibited diverse abilities. Jagjit's application of engineering principles to his incredible art decorations for the Diwali[86] festival gave his character more depth, which in turn facilitated the audience's reading of the character as a well-rounded, multi-talented individual rather than a one-sided stereotype. The blending of art and science also helped Jagjit win over his father who was impressed with his son's artistic abilities as well as his application of engineering – in other words, his son's fusion between two very different disciplines. This particular subplot of the film served as a metaphor that it was possible to have the best of two cultures and harmoniously

[84] *Bhangra* is a traditional folk dance that originated in the Indian state of Punjab.
[85] *Dandia* is traditional folk dance that involves rhythmic hitting of wooden sticks while dancing in circular or line formations.
[86] Hindu New Year.

synthesize them into something unique. Such scenes also provided Indian-American and Indian characters with dimensions that not only displayed a multifarious spectrum but also constrained the viewer from stereotyping Indians and Indian Americans as Hindi and Hollywood films examined in this study have done.

American Desi also subverted Hollywood stereotypes of Indians, such as Indians being engineering majors and the stereotype that engineers, particularly Indian engineers, were socially inept. Not only were these stereotypes broken in aforementioned ways – through clothing, sense of humor, diverse interests, and versatility – they were arguably disproved. For example, Kris's roommates were the ones who helped him get the Indian-American girl, Nina, who was very in tune with Indian culture. Their lovable personalities were what helped convince Nina to have dinner with Kris. Once again, through depicting these characters as having vibrant personalities and being comfortable with (rather than confused about) their biculturalism, the Hollywood stereotype of the Socially Inept Indian and the Hindi film stereotype of the Culturally Inept Indian residing outside India were rebuffed. With time and the help of his Indian college roommates, whom he despised earlier in the film, Kris overcame his cultural disconnect and embraced his Indian culture and brotherhood. This was signified at the end of the film at the Indian holiday function by his clothing, a white *kurta-pajama* (Indian ensemble), instead of the American sports jersey and cap and blue jeans. Rather than drumsticks, as shown at the beginning of the film, Kris held *dandia*, sticks used in a traditional Indian folkdance and a signifier of Indian culture (Ramirez Berg, 2002).

At a superficial glance, the transformation of Kris does seem to embrace the Hindi film stereotype of the Transformed Indian residing outside India; however, closer examination shows that there was a more realistic take on this transformation. Kris goes from the Hindi film industry's the Westernized Indian to the Culturally Inept. There was a gradual rather than extreme change, as found in Hindi film such as *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back) and *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (I Live In Your Heart). More importantly, the main people who helped him were Indian Americans as well. In-group stereotyping did not take place in this case, thereby trumping an opportunity for the Us-Them demarcation to form (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Having multiple Indian-American characters with important roles and fairly significant amounts of screen time did not allow any space for the Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Consequently, there was more room for multiple interpretations, or polysemy (Hall, 1992), thereby making for a film that is bound to be salient to Indian-American audiences.

One particular attempt to form an Us-Them boundary, however, was made by "villain" Rakesh. Rakesh was an insincere friend of Nina's who, like Jagjit and Salim, was from India (as denoted by an Indian accent) and, unlike Kris, was well versed in Indian culture and made consistent attempts to expose Kris's lack of knowledge about Indian culture. In a confrontation, Rakesh called Kris an ABCD, an offensive (and obsolete) term. Perplexed, Kris asks, "What?" Rakesh snaps, "A-B-C-D! American Born Confused Desi." Not only did Rakesh call Kris an ABCD, he had to define it for

him as well. Although the term ABCD was overtly mentioned and defined, FOB[87] (the counter term) was not, thus providing only a partially delineated context. In this case, Rakesh, was knowledgeable of his Indian culture and therefore in a position of power (Ramirez Berg, 2002) in comparison to Kris who had thus far denied his Indian heritage. This juxtaposition designated Kris as the outsider, the Other, and Rakesh as part of "the dominant in-group" which "continually convinces itself and the Other that it is morally superior, more civilized, and in all ways, finer than the Other" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 22). This type of stereotype "indicate[s] a power relation" (p. 21) but needs to be contextualized by using and defining the counter stereotype, defined at the beginning of Indian immigrant film *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003).

Unlike the British-Indian film, *Bend It Like Beckham* (2003), *American Desi* (2001) is not as technically polished, but it does provide the Indian-American viewer with familiar icons of both cultures in such a way that she is bound to feel included rather than alienated. But, although it is clear that Kris is "white-washed" and will endure a cultural transformation of some degree at some point, specific scenes about his childhood would have provided much needed context regarding the role that his parents played in his life and what it was like for him growing up in America in an Indian household. While watching this film, one wonders how Kris's cultural identity took shape and how it is that he, like Reena in *Chutney Popcorn* (1999), became so oblivious to and ignorant of Indian culture, two things which are deemed somewhat unusual in the Indian-American community. Providing some background on the childhood of Indian-American Kris and

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[87] FOB stands for Fresh Off the Boat; this is a term that is utilized within a variety of ethnic communities in America to refer to recent immigrants.

his interactions with other Indians and reactions to Indian functions could have painted a more cohesive portrait of Kris and the struggle of growing up as an Indian American the way it is done with second-generation Indian-American protagonist Sureel in the second-generation Indian-American film, *American Chai* (2002).

<p align="center">*American Chai (2002)*</p>

Plot summary: Sureel is a senior in college who for four years has successfully managed to keep his real major a secret from his parents. They believe he is pre-med, single, and bound for medical school and an arranged marriage; in reality, he is actually a music major and in a band, has a white girlfriend, and plans to pursue music after he graduates. He becomes interested in a young Indian-American woman that he sees performing a solo dance to Indian and American music. Also interested in fusion, Sureel is inspired by Maya and their relationship develops. Eventually, Sureel confronts his father and confesses his dream to pursue music. His mother and brother support him at the battle of the bands show, and ultimately, so does his father. With his father's blessing, Sureel follows his musical path to England where he will reunite with Sureel who followed her dream to pursue dance.

Like *American Desi*'s (2001) director, Pandya, Anurag Mehta is a New Jersey resident, went to Rutgers University, and also loosely based his Indian-American film, *American Chai* (2002), on some of his own experiences and as well as on those of fellow Indian Americans. Perhaps this is what renders *American Chai* so salient and relatable. Released on April 5, 2002, *American Chai* (2002) is one of the few Indian-American films to debut at the box office. It is the first among Indian-American films to win three awards, including Best Feature Film 2001 (Philadephia Festival of Independents), the Audience Award 2001 (Gen Art Film Festival), and the Audience Award 2001

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(Slamdance Film Festival) (National Asian American Telecommunications Association, 2004). AsiaSource describes *American Chai* (2002) as an "impressive debut feature [that] explores issues of assimilation, generational conflict, and interracial dating, and presents an honest portrayal of the Indian American community" (AsiaSource, 2002). Presented by Fusion Films and a Dream Merchant production, *American Chai* (2002) was directed by 28-year-old Indian-American Anurag Mehta and starred his brother and first-time actor, Aalok Mehta, and was privately funded (NAATA, 2004).

In his interview with AsiaSource, an online magazine, Mehta shared how Hollywood and Hindi films influenced his interest in movies while growing up in America. "I also watched a lot of Bollywood movies back then. I loved Amitabh Bachchan movies" (AsiaSource, 2002). *American Chai* (2002) illustrates Mehta's connection to Hindi films with a dream sequence that pays homage to the "Bollywood" film formula in a tongue-in-cheek manner. Mehta elaborated, "I have always liked Bollywood films, but as I got more immersed in Hollywood films, Bollywood films started to take on a funny kind of charm" (AsiaSource, 2002).

RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? In an interview, Mehta explained the source of his inspiration for making *American Chai*, a play on the phrase American Pie (NAATA, 2004), "I grew up in a town in New Jersey that had some Indians, but not too many. When I got to college, it was the first time I saw so many other Indian American kids. I always wanted to tell the story of how we all

grew up" (AsiaSource, 2002). And what better way to tell an Indian-American story and explore self-representation than through the entertainment medium of film?

In *American Chai* (2002), Sureel (Aalok Mehta) is a senior in college who for four years has successfully managed to keep his real major a secret from his parents. They believe he is pre-med, single, and bound for medical school and an arranged marriage; in reality, he is actually majoring in music and in a band, has a white girlfriend, and plans to pursue music after he graduates. To help answer RQ5, which asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film?, the introductory scene was textually analyzed. In the opening scene, Sureel was practicing with his band in his dorm suite when he received a phone call from his parents who were downstairs. In a panic, Sureel ushered everyone (including his white girlfriend) into another room, saying to his band, "You know I can't let them know about the music." He straightened out the common area and laid out a few pre-medical texts only to have his father simply peek in and tell Sureel to come home with them for dinner. All that trouble for just a couple of seconds in this opening scene demonstrated to the audience the amount of anxiety that an Indian American might experience in order to maintain peace and satisfaction on behalf of his parents. A tight close-up of Sureel ensued, allowing the audience a moment to realize Sureel's stress and experience the weary look of relief on his face. It was here that Sureel's narration began:

Sureel (narrating):	*All my life, I've been hiding things from my parents. See, I was born in America which makes me American. My parents were born in India which makes me Indian American. They raised me in this country with the values and beliefs they established in their time in their world which makes me crazy.*

In three simple sentences, Sureel provided a lucid definition of an Indian American and a sketch of the basic background of an Indian American. This type of narration has not been utilized in any of the Indian-American films previously mentioned nor has it been featured in the Hindi and Hollywood films quantitatively examined in this study. As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Not only is this narrative approach refreshing in terms of style, it is also functional; this narration took the time to set the tone of the film to inform the audience of Sureel's background, and to outline the issues that Sureel has (and has not) been dealing with – in other words, this narrative style provided context, which Hindi and Hollywood films did not. The narration gave a voice literally to Sureel as our storyteller and symbolically to Indian Americans who can relate to Sureel.

From a tender age, an Indian American is questioned occasionally by his white peers about his racial identity, ethnic identity, and religious identity. While these questions are basic (and often innocent), the answers are either unknown or known to a

limited extent by a young Indian-American child. This may be because people at home

and in the Indian community seem similar – like; consequently, answers to such

questions are most likely not discussed in depth and figuring such things out is often left

to the Indian-American child. RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly

second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues,

cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment

medium of film? To help answer this question, a childhood scene from *American Chai*

was qualitatively examined. Although the childhood scenes were brief, Mehta has

contextualized the way Indian Americans and Indian parents in this film view issues by

including these scenes; consequently, Mehta has made *American Chai* (2002) the first

Indian-American film to directly (visually as well as narratively) address Indian-

American childhood.

Sureel (narrating)*:*	*Being the only Indian family in town, I developed somewhat of an identity crisis early on.*

[Flashback to when Sureel is 10 years old and at the playground with two white friends]

White friend #1:	*Are you Christian or are you Jewish?*
Sureel:	*I don't think I'm either.*
White friend #1*:*	*You have to be either one. I'm Jewish; it's better.*

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Sureel:	*"I guess I'm Jewish, too.*
White friend #2:	*"Are you a Negro?*
Sureel:	*No, I'm an Indian.*
White friend #2:	*What tribe are you from?*

[Sureel's end of the seesaw goes up and the camera freezes the frame and captures the blank look on his face. Narration continues.]

Sureel (narrating):	*So, by age 10, I had become the world's first Indian Jewish Native-American Negro. And that sucked because I just wanted to be like all the other kids, but I couldn't because my Dad never let me do anything.*

American Chai (2002) is groundbreaking because it is the first Indian-American film that addresses the issues of cultural identity labels and the first to establish for the audience a trope into the childhood and family background of the main Indian-American character. This scene addressed a pertinent issue regarding the developing identities of young Indian-American children and also has a personal bearing for director Mehta. As Mehta himself explained, "I was one of the only Indian kids in my town. And kids are very blunt. And you know, there's always a reminder. I've had experiences where people ask me - am I Christian or Jewish? - and that's it. Part of you wants to fit in and part of you wants to be yourself" (NAATA, 2004). This is one of the many reasons why Indian-American films are so important. Film provides a medium through which Indian

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Americans can communicate scenes from their "lived experiences" (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Although early on in the film Sureel was introduced to the audience as a young adult approaching graduation, the method of utilizing several flashbacks of Sureel's childhood serves two purposes: to efficiently explain Sureel's frantic behavior to those unfamiliar with growing up in a strict Indian household, and to entertain the Indian Americans (and perhaps others) who can relate to Sureel's plight.

RQ4 of this study asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Even though *American Chai* is primarily about the self-expression of second-generation Indian Americans, there is also a character of interest for recent Indian immigrants – a positive, well-rounded depiction not found in Hollywood films as indicated by the content analysis. Actor Ajay Naidu, played Hari, an Indian immigrant who ran a liquor store. While at first it seemed that this Indian character fit the common stereotype in mainstream American media (e.g.: Apu in *The Simpsons*), Mehta made an effort to develop this character by taking Sureel (and the audience) to Hari's home and sharing the character's story. Hari was an Indian immigrant of the working class who toiled day and night at his liquor store, lived in a tiny but cozy apartment, and waited for his wife to get approved for her visa so she could join him from India. As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? and RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the

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entertainment medium of film? Regarding the socio-economic status of Indians in America, Mehta said he especially wanted to confront that stereotype and emphasized that not all Indians are upper-middle class. The content analysis of Hindi and Hollywood films marked the perpetuation of this stereotype. "I wanted to touch on that. The film shows a mish mash of people and reflects the diversity of the Indian community" (NAATA, 2004). Just as *American Desi* showed a variety of Indian and Indian-American characters to combat social stereotypes and stereotyping in general, Mehta achieved this with his characters in *American Chai* on a socio-economic level. As the quantitative analysis showed, 70% of Indians living abroad were shown as Wealthy and Upper Class in Hindi films while the economic status of 67% of people of Indian ethnicity were not shown at all in Hollywood films. Such statistics call for self-representation and the utilization of media as transmissions of culture.

Initially, Naidu's character seemed like the "typical" happy-go-lucky" convenient store owner who worked around the clock and spoke with a thick Indian accent – an oddball character, the Other (Hall, 1992; Ramirez Berg, 2002), positioned in the film for lighthearted comedy and at first glance, possibly to render otherwise marginalized Indian Americans normal. Again, these juxtapositions evoked Ramirez Berg's theory on Ideological Stereotypes. According to Ramirez Berg, "Stereotypes don't just derogatorily depict the Other – they also indicate a preferred power relation" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 21). He continued, "The stereotypical definition of Others, therefore, has powerful ideological consequences, simultaneously marginalizing Them and establishing and maintaining an explicit Us-Them boundary" (p. 22). In Hindi films, the latest trend

is the maintenance of an "Us-Them boundary" with Us being Indians in India and Them being Indians residing outside India.

As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? In *American Chai* (2002), not only did Naidu's character take care of Sureel when he gets drunk, but he took Sureel to his apartment, let him sleep there, and made him an elaborate Indian breakfast the next day. When Sureel was taken aback by Hari's kindness, Hari said, "We're Indian. Indian people stick together." In return, when he left, Sureel called Hari, *bhai* (a term of respect meaning older brother) thus breaking yet another stereotype of Indian-American youths, their relationships with Indians, and their Indianness (Bacon, 1999). Regarding Hollywood and other American media depictions of people of Indian descent in the United States, one might question whether Naidu's character Hari was a stereotype: an Indian man with an accent who works in a liquor store; features that made this depiction in *American Chai* non-stereotypical, however, were manifold. Emotional nuances and depth were given to Naidu's character. Rather than only giving Hari screen time in his place of work as done in Hollywood films, this Indian-American film showed him in his home and even focused on sentimental details with close-ups. Most importantly, not only was the audience told Hari's story, but Hari himself did this, and was therefore given a voice. Including these features granted Hari dimensions and therefore, reduced if not eliminated the chance of stereotyping. Mehta explained, "I think there's a difference between stereotypes and archetypes. Stereotypes only show one side. But there are a lot of Indians who work in liquor stores. It's an archetypal character, but

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you have to show how real they are too" (AsiaSource, 2002) and Mehta achieved this with Indian-American character Sureel as well.

Mehta shared his views on the stereotypical term ABCD: "I find that most of us are not confused. I think we grow up and have different issues to deal with… I find the majority of the Indian American community here to be well-adjusted" (NAATA, 2004). Clearly, his feelings on this matter were reflected in the script of his film. As RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? While it is true that Sureel hid his real life from his parents, this is not a sign connoting cultural confusion or self-hatred. This stemmed more so from a lack of communication with his parents, specifically his father, and therefore was not only a cultural conflict but also a generational conflict, an issue affecting people from all kinds of backgrounds. RQ3 asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? The blending of the two cultures, Indian and American, began with details such as the fact that Sureel not only used his name as is (unlike *American Desi*'s Kris), but he attributed his passion for music to his father's Indian records and even plays the *sitar* (Indian classical instrument) – an accomplishment not featured with many Indian youth characters in Hindi films. Before getting kicked out of his band, Sureel had plans to play at the University's Indian Cultural Show, but he still stayed and watched the show with rapt attention; he particularly took interest in what second-generation Indian-American character (and eventual love interest)

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Maya did with cultural fusion in her dance performance. He expressed his desire to do something similar with his music. So Sureel was not so much confused as he was conflicted due to his desire to share his dreams with his father in particular. He waned to pursue the arts and not the sciences, but above all, like Jagjit in *American Desi*, he wanted his father's approval and support. *American Chai*'s (2002) Mehta elaborated:

> It's a hard issue. I think it stems from the respect for elders and parents that is inherent in Indian culture. Our parents never publicly questioned the word of their parents … America, on the other hand, is all about independence and following your dreams. All immigrants came here because they are pioneers of some sort…. I find it interesting that the older generation of Indian Americans had that pioneering spirit, but it got stifled in their children (AsiaSource, 2002).

This is another instance that illustrates the importance of the medium of film as a transmission of culture for Indian Americans and the need and desire for self-representation among Indian Americans. It is interesting to note that this type of conflict is somehow addressed in most Indian-American films; it is a generational conflict, however, what makes the presentation of this theme unique in Indian-American films is the manner in which the issues were addressed and the fact that Indian-American characters tended to draw inspiration from their Indian roots and actuated their plans in their American environment. Some may argue that the themes are cliched or hackneyed; however, no story is the same and no presentation is the same as further analyses of additional films will show. These are conflicts and issues that Indian-American individuals have experienced and are expressing through the entertainment medium of cinema. When asked about whether the production of pioneering Indian-American films,

ABCD and *American Desi,* somehow reflected the state of the development of the Indian American community in America, Mehta agreed, "I think it's just natural that film would come out of this. Film is in the blood of Indian people. Film is such a big part of Indian culture. I think it's natural that you're going to have a period in the beginning where people make [coming of age] films" (AsiaSource, 2002).

While *American Chai* (2002) covered many Indian-American issues from assimilation to cultural identity to interracial dating, there was a cut scene in which Sureel was filling out a routine section of a standardized test; when he reached the portion on race/ethnicity, he had to check: Other (NAATA, 2004). Although this scene did not make the film, this is an important issue that will hopefully be included in another Indian-American film because it demonstrates the lack of choices from which an Indian-American can pick to represent himself.

Where's the Party, Yaar? (2003)

Plot summary: This film explores the brotherhood between Indian immigrant, Hari, and second-generation Indian American, Mo(han), whose fathers were close back in India. Mo is a popular party promoter on his college campus. Because of their fathers' close bond, however, Mo(han) is expected to take Hari under his wing, but this poses a problem for party promoter Mo as he has been instructed by his boss to keep the location of the biggest party on campus a secret and the list of guests exclusive. Mo quickly discovers how little they seem to have in common but still manages to learn from Hari and eventually bond with him. Multiple subplots of this film accentuate the diversity found throughout Indian and Indian-American groups.

Also in the same genre as *American Desi* (2001) and *American Chai* (2002) is *Where's the Party, Yaar?* (2003), released by Indian-American filmmakers in Houston.

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In November of 2003, *WTPY?* was released in four cities: Richardson and Austin, Texas; Los Angeles, California; and Atlanta, Georgia (www.wtpy.com). This film explored the brotherhood between an Indian immigrant and a second-generation Indian American, whose fathers were close back in India. Second-generation Indian-American Mo (Kal Penn) was therefore expected to take Indian immigrant Hari (Sunil Malhotra) under his wing. Mo (Mohan) quickly discovered how little they seem to have in common but still managed to learn from Hari and eventually bond with him. Multiple subplots of this film accentuated the diversity found throughout Indian and Indian-American groups.

RQ3 asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? One of the most noteworthy and original features of this film was the insightful, albeit swift, series of interviews that Indian-American character Janvi Valia, Mo's love interest, conducted for her anthropology class documentary on "the Indian-American experience" as she phrased it. In mere seconds, these interviews covered a variety of stereotypes of Indian Americans: that all people of Indian ethnicity know each other; that they all own hotels/motels. Other stereotypes and misconceptions addressed were: the regard for people of Indian origin as exotic and therefore sexual objects; that the terms Indian American and Indian have the same meaning as American Indian and Native American; and that all 'brown' people are Indian.

> Guy #2: *I hate when people ask me if I know their neighbor's brother's cousin's husband who owns a motel."*
>
> Guy #3: *And no, we don't live on a reservation.*

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Girl #1:	*"Well, after Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom came out, everybody started asking me if I ate monkey brains. Hello? I'm a frickin' vegetarian!?!"*
Guy #4:	*What are you talkin' about? I'm not Indian! I'm Lankan!*
Guy #5:	*"It's gotta be my eyes. Right? Women just dig it, you know?"*

Part of this dialogue showed a female referring to a scene in Hollywood film *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), a Hollywood film analyzed in this study. The scene showed Indians eating "monkey brains" and was an example of temporarily placing the White American in a comical or shocking position; the use of this supposedly Indian food helps define the normalcy of the White person (Ramirez Berg, 2002) in relation to the Indian Other. Although this was fleetingly mentioned in this dialogue, the mere articulation of everyone asking her that following the release of the film not only served as a confrontation of the Hollywood stereotype, but within *WTPY?*, documented it as a reference that resonated with Indian Americans familiar with the question. These interviews provided a trope into the various images and experiences of Indian-American youth. Presented in a unique manner, the interviews served as a sub-narrative that briefly mentioned different Indian Americans' points of view and allows the Indian-American viewer to relate to a variety of depictions of Indian Americans, and especially second-generation Indian Americans. This film, particularly Janvi's role, will be analyzed more in depth through the feminist perspective later in this chapter.

Ball and Chain/Arrangement (2004)

Plot summary: This film begins with a few unfortunate encounters between Indian Americans Ameet and Saima, who immediately take a disliking to each other; both sets of their parents, however, believe the two are a match made in heaven. The only things they have in common are their distaste for each other and their willingness to go to any lengths to get their parents to break off the arranged engagement. Having successfully executed their plan, they soon find themselves in love with each other and trying to convince Saima's parents that it was all a hoax.

Lastly, we have the film, *Ball and Chain* (2004), also known as *Arrangement*. Very Hollywoodian in its approach yet Hindi film at heart, *Ball and Chain* (2004) begins with a few unfortunate encounters between Indian Americans Ameet (Sunil Malhotra) and Saima (Lisa Ray) who immediately take a disliking to each other; both sets of their parents, however, believe the two are perfect for each other. The only things they have in common, however, are that they do not like each other and they will do anything to get their parents to break off the arranged engagement. Having successfully executed their plan, Ameet and Saima find themselves in love with each other and trying to convince Saima's parents that it was all a hoax.

This film is meant to be a light-hearted, silly romantic comedy that tells of a blossoming friendship and love story borne out of an arrangement. One of the most charming attributes of this film is the way it deals with the concept of arranged marriages. As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Unlike Indian immigrant films *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003) and *Green Card Fever* (2003)

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and Hindi films such as *Pardes* (1997) and *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (1999), *Ball and Chain* (2004) offered happy endings without too much heartache and headache. Interestingly, this film supported the idea of arranged marriages and showcased the successful arranged union between supporting characters Bobby (Kal Penn) and Ruby (Purva Bedi). Bobby was a charming character, who behind the scenes at a fashion show was chatting with a couple of models; when his friends reminded him of his meeting the next day with Ruby and her family, he said he was not too concerned… until his friends started laughing. When Bobby met her, Ruby was wearing over-sized glasses, braces, and a headgear; in slapstick style, Bobby ran upstairs only to jump out the window to escape marrying her. In the next scene, he was shown in a wheelchair with a cast on his leg and a bandage around his head, ready to marry his bride, Ruby. Although this couple was shown only peripherally, the viewer noted scene by scene that Ruby took good care of Bobby during his recovery and they grew very much in love with each other. Hindi film stereotypes of the Indian American who abandons or abuses his fiancée (*Pardes*), cheats or proposes divorce having given the marriage a half-hearted try (*Lajja*; *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain*) are nowhere to be found. In fact, in *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* (1999), the heroine nursed her husband back to perfect health after his life-threatening accident, and after thanking her and telling her she would make a great nurse, the Indian from abroad proposed separation; although at the end of Hindi films *Lajja* and *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain*, they reunited, the negative depiction of the Indian American in *Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain* was noticeably present for large portions

of the film. Indian-American film *Ball and Chain* (2004), however, dispels this stereotype.

As RQ5 asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition through the entertainment medium of film? Particularly unique to this film was the focus on the female character, Saima, and her relationship with her father. Thus far, no Indian-American film has given the father-daughter relationship much attention. The interactions between Saima and her father juxtaposed with the blatant favoritism bestowed upon Saima's brother, Dev, served to highlight the double standards regarding socializing and restrictions according to the sex of the child. This is the only Indian-American film to include this issue so frankly. Saima was very respectful of her father and did not talk back; this is not to say that she obeyed his every command, however. When Saima decided to take a little break from the woes of medical school to go out one night, her father disapproved and she disappointedly turned around; her brother passed by her and headed out the door as their father told him to have a good time. Saima went back upstairs to her room, opened her balcony doors, flung over the tied sheets and headed out with her girlfriend. Since this was clearly a routine for her, it is interesting that she still chose to try and use the front door when she knew her father was sitting there watching the *Ramayana*[88]. Saima was hoping that her father would recognize her as a responsible adult rather than his little girl.

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[88] The *Ramayana* is a cultural Hindu epic familiar to Indian families around the world.

RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? While out at a club, Saima did not wear a scandalous outfit, did not flirt with anyone, and did not dance provocatively; she was not shown as a woman of poor character. The Hindi film stereotype, however, would depict her as doing most if not all of these things, thus painting the portrait of the Westernized Indian in need of cultural rescuing so she can become the Transformed Indian residing abroad. Saima was shown as having a little too much too drink when she once again ran into Ameet, once again got a drink spilled on her, inadvertently caused an amusing ruckus, and got drenched yet again; however, Saima was not shown as sexually charged, or needing to be taken care of because of unruly behavior caused by drunkenness as shown with "NRI" women in Hindi films *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) and *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (1999). Unlike these Hindi film characters, Saima was comically quiet and simply needed a ride back to her home, and unfortunately, must ride home with Ameet. In a humorous scene, she defeatedly got out of the car, walked across the lawn, and climbed up the tied sheets.

The end of the film, however, was pure Hindi film style and sentiment. Ameet, very upset that the villain, Ashol, was about to marry his true love, Saima, ran out of gas as he raced in his car to stop the wedding. He found himself near the zoo and was able to get an elephant and arrive in Hindi film and fairytale fashion to clear his name, particularly with Saima's father, expose the villain for what he really is, punch him out, and declare his love for Saima – all in front of everyone, providing for a happy Hindi film ending. This slapstick comedy fuses both the Hollywood and Hindi film styles thereby

providing audiences with a generally carefree portrayal of arranged marriages and subtle glimpses of family life within the Indian-American community. In some ways, *Ball and Chain* (2004) can be likened to Indian-American immigrant film *Flavors* (2004) in that it also relies on a sense of easiness while telling its story. Everything about the film is not tied to some sort of struggle and reconciliation between two cultures; rather, the characters are natural in their roles as two young Indian-American adults. They simply live their lives as the audience watches the protagonists fall in hate and then in love with each other.

Feminist Perspective

"The stereotypical definition of Others… has powerful ideological consequences, simultaneously marginalizing Them and establishing and maintaining an explicit Us-Them boundary" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 22). As demonstrated thus far in the analysis of these films, the use of symbols in Indian-American films is indicative of the long-established use of visual culture in Indian films, particularly in Hindi films. While the "mother symbol" (Vasudevan, 1995) was extremely compelling during India's independence period and still is today in Hindi films in general, the role of the mother in recent coming-of-age Indian-American films is diminished considerably in comparison; however, when compared to Hindi films portraying Indian-American youth or Indian youth residing out side of India, the role of the Indian mother in Hindi films and Indian-American films respectively is somewhat proportionate as they are in Hollywood films as well.

In most Indian-American films, the generational conflicts tended to be between the father and son, while the mother played a negligible role, and at best a mediator. This was apparent in *American Desi* (2001), *American Chai* (2002), *Where's the Party, Yaar?* (2003), and *Wings of Hope* (2001). Although a small part, the mother near the end of *American Chai* (2002) did break the stereotype of the submissive Indian female by supporting her son despite her husband's disapproval. Overall, however, the narratives so far tended to center around the conflict between the Indian-American male child and Indian father. The young Indian-American female was glaringly neglected and/or marginalized with respect to male counterparts in all three types of films (Hindi, Hollywood and Indian-American), with the obvious exceptions of *ABCD* (1999) and *Chutney Popcorn* (1999) as recorded in the taxonomy (see Table 13 in chapter 7).

The main cast in *American Desi* (2001) consisted of seven Indian-American males and two Indian-American females. This unfortunate fact validates analyzing "where women are not" (Lesage, 1979, p. 151). In this film, the first depiction of an Indian woman was of Kris's mother. Her first scene lasted a total of thirty seconds though we only saw her face in the last 10 of those seconds. Her hands were shown as she performed a Hindu prayer while instrumental Indian music serves as a sign to connote her piousness. One scene later, Kris's mother, dressed in a *sari* (Indian garment) and wearing a *bindi* (dot traditionally symbolizing marriage), demurely holds the *pooja* (worship) tray.

[Kris walks down the staircase and upon seeing his mother, rolls his eyes.]

Kris: *"Mo-o-o-m! Come on, I thought you weren't going to make a big deal out of this.*

Father: *"Aare, Krishna, bete. You know your mother. Leaving the house is leaving the house no matter where you go.*

[Mother gently nods and bows her head.]

So just be a good boy and let her do her pooja."

As Kris's mother started the ritual, a religious song began playing in the background and she put a *tikka* (red paint-like substance to bless someone on an auspicious day) on Kris's forehead. She then proceeded to put a *tikka* on Eric. When Kris starts to protest, she gives him a look and does it anyway. She finished the ceremony as Kris rolled his eyes and corrected him with a shake of her head when he started to take the *prasad* (blessed sweet) with his left hand rather than his right. The most important point to note is that Kris's mother never said one word. She was silent in all of her scenes. She was not given a voice, let alone much of a "point of view" (Gledhill, 1984, p. 18). Her husband spoke for her. Her husband was her voice. "Don't forget to call as soon as you reach the college! You know your mother will not eat unless she hears from you!" the father called out to Kris and the mother stayed silent throughout her last scene. The mother was a symbol of piety, motherliness, vulnerability; she was "tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (Gledhill, 1984, p. 32).

When a large group of relatives get out of the car to bid Kris farewell, it was immediately noticeable that the women were all wearing Indian clothes. Kris's female cousin Sonam, dressed in Indian clothes (unusual for the occasion), gave him flowers to

wish him luck and calls him *bhaiya* (brother). They shared an awkward – and on Kris's part obligatory – hug, and as he left, she pushed up her over-sized glasses. Sonam's Indian clothes, unruly short hair, over-sized glasses, and awkwardness all signified her "Otherness." This was a classic example of an Indian woman being utilized as "the Other" to help shape the male protagonist's identity, reinforcing patriarchal discourse (Gledhill, 1984).

Despite these portrayals, however, *American Desi* does address the Hindi film stereotype of young Indian-American women (and those residing elsewhere outside India) in one of its sub-plots. As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? Salim, a character from India, believed that all Indian-American girls were culturally bankrupt. When he found out that Jagjit's brother was marrying an Indian-American female and not someone from India, he said, "She's from here? Then, uh, maybe you should get him an Indian cookbook… [smirks]… unless he likes eating out […] at least with a girl from India you know she can cook."

Jagjit:	*"You wouldn't even consider marrying an Indian girl from here?"*
Salim:	*"No way. Who needs all that headache when I come home from work. 'Salim, let's go out for dinner again. I'm too tired to cook. I work, too!'"*
	[Scoffs.]
Jagjit:	*"Come on, yaar! Not all Indian girls are like that."*

<div style="text-align: right">

Salim: *"You've seen them; they're always hanging out at those parties with those goras [white people]. I mean when are they going to learn how to cook a decent daal[89]?"*

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It was here, 20 minutes into the film, that an Indian-American girl was first mentioned in the film. This was done to establish the expectation of a certain stereotype, the Hindi film stereotype of the Culturally Inept Indian residing outside India and then to perhaps confront and subvert it later.

In *American Desi* (2001), the first image that is shown of the Indian-American heroine was a brief camera shot of her laughing and whispering to her friends; this visual was narrated by soft Indian harmony and was taken from Kris's point of view. It was a view from a few rows up from where Kris was sitting in the lecture hall so the power of the gaze was given to Kris (Gledhill, 1984). She was being looked at and does not have the power to look back. Also, the viewer did not yet hear her voice, but through Kris's eyes, it was apparent that she was moving her mouth and laughing. Still, the audience did not hear her as the music overpowered her and she was silent. Gledhill asked, "*Can women speak, and can images of women speak for women?*" (Gledhill, 1984, p.31). In the two examples cited thus far, the answer seems to be women cannot speak, and if they do, they may not be heard, and images of women cannot speak for women because they are created through "male constructs" (Gledhill, 1984, p. 32).

Not until 25 minutes into the film did a woman of Indian ethnicity finally speak. Farah raised her hand and asked if they could turn in their assignment via e-mail. When the professor said no, she looked annoyed. Salim noticed from his seat up above and said

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[89] *Daal* is a general term for cooked lentils (or similar type of legume) and spices.

to Jagjit, "You see that? You see how disrespectful she is to the professor? That's what I was talking about. Can you imagine coming home from a hard day of work to that kind of nagging? Ha?" Clearly, Salim had his mind made up and when class was over, Farah bumped into him and said, "Excuse me," as she raced by, to which Salim replied and gestured to his friends, "But of course! Madam probably has a toga party to go to." This is an example of the Hindi film stereotype of the Culturally Inept Indian and marks the beginning of the Salim-Farah sub-plot. When asked about whether he was interested in Farah, Salim angrily scoffed at the thought:

Salim:	*"All Indian girls raised in America become corrupt. You saw Farah at the party – the way she was dressed. I can just imagine if her daddy saw her. Poor guy would have a heart attack."*
Jagjit:	*"Why don't you give her a chance, Salim? Maybe there's more to her than that."*
Salim:	*"No way. She's been hunting me down like anything. Everywhere I go, there she is – in the class, in the dining hall, at that stupid party. I'm already feeling like I'm married. Pretty soon she'll be asking me to carry her make-up."*

Eventually, Salim was forced to reckon with his preconceived notions about Indian-American women. An avid Hindi film viewer, Salim believed that all Indian-American girls were "corrupt" and preferred to marry an Indian girl from India, but he later found himself in an uncomfortable situation because of his developing feelings for an Indian-American girl; eventually, he was forced to reckon with his preconceived and stereotypical notions about Indian-American women. When Salim saw Farah in traditional garb and praying, part of the Hindi film stereotype of Indian-American women

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as irreverent and morally corrupt was shattered. Another stereotype of Indian-American women that Salim held was that Indian-American women cannot cook. When Salim sneaked into Farah's place to apologize to her, he stole a taste of something she had cooked on the stove and was pleasantly surprised. Farah's character showed: "that NRI [Non-Resident Indian] girls may speak English and be more liberal, but that does not mean that they do not know what their heritage and culture is all about" (www.planetbollywood.com). It was in these ways that a few Hindi film stereotypes of Indian Americans were addressed and successfully subverted by an Indian-American film.

The Hindi film stereotype of the Culturally Inept Indian residing outside India was subverted here, not solely by her attire when she was praying and the fact that she can cook, but also because of her commitment to her religion. Her frantic reaction when Salim sneaked into her room to apologize to her and her parents unexpectedly drop by also challenged this stereotype and depictions of Indian-American females (and Indian women residing elsewhere outside India) as morally questionable. On the surface, these Hindi film stereotypes of Indian-American women (and Indian women residing elsewhere outside India) were confronted for the first time ever through representations shaped by Indian Americans; however, one still questions: Do these images profoundly subvert stereotypes of Indian-American women or do they simply acknowledge them? This is to say, do these representations confront these stereotypes but then perpetuate the ideal Indian neo-traditional image of an Indian woman: a woman who is fair (and therefore beautiful), has long hair, is religious, can cook, and is just a "good" girl? In

other words, is this ideal an aspiring stereotype? Are we "in danger of unwittingly adopting a mode of realism which functions to preserve rather than to challenge the status quo" (Gledhill, 1984, p. 21)? This is a complicated question considering that the "we" in the writing, direction, and production of *American Desi* are all male. Like Kang, one questions assumptions "around who can speak about what and for whom and in which cultural, disciplinary contexts" (Kang, 2002, p. 71). After all, the only woman cited in the beginning credits, except for the two female actors of Indian ethnicity, was Smita Patel, the woman who played Kris's silent mother; she was the choreographer of the film.

 American Desi is the first film to address Hindi film stereotypes of Indian-American females, and the first to tell a unique Indian-American story, using culturally diverse characters. Perhaps the achievements of these firsts were reason enough for fans to wholly embrace *American Desi*. As one female viewer raved, "I loved it. I thought it was hilarious. My friends and I saw the story of our lives writ large." She is female and able to relate to the film and experience pleasure from it. Another college graduate said, "While I was watching *American Desi*, I couldn't help thinking 'Oh, I remember that,' or 'I did this.' The characters portrayed in the movie resemble many of the real people in large universities in America where there are a lot of *desis*[90]" (www.rediff.com). "Finally, any NRI [Non-Resident Indian] who is tired of being projected as a tyrant in Hindi films can watch a film which is realistic" (www.planetbollywood.com). Commentaries such as these attest to the significance of self-expression that contributes to the salient characteristics of Indian-American films as transmissions of culture. This is

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[90] The term *desi* has continued to evolve and in this context means Indian.

further asserted by the series of interviews held by *WTPY?*'s Indian-American character Janvi.

The following quote was one of the responses of a second-generation Indian American from Janvi's interview for her research on "the emergence of a new culture:"

Girl #2:	*"I guess I just don't really understand – when American girls wear Indian clothes, it's ok, but when Indian girls wear it, we're FOBs* [Fresh Off the Boat]*."*

This last comment was poignant and the camera paused for a moment to acknowledge this dichotomous reaction of Indian and Indian-American males to American (meaning white in this context) versus Indian-American women wearing Indian clothes. The idea of patriarchy was complicated by this Indian-American female's statement. It was referring to "the position that white women have" over women of Indian ethnicity (Gaines, 1999, p. 294) through the eyes of men of Indian ethnicity. White women, that is American women, in other words, non-hyphenated women are allowed to wear Indian clothes; Indian women, Indian-American women are not or they are ridiculed and called *FOBs*. In the context of this quote, who is using this term? Men of Indian ethnicity. This quote, though it only comprised a few seconds in the film, is striking. It is subversive, and though brief, a significant political act; however, once again, the representation of Indian-American females is sparse. A positive fact, however, is that the person behind the camera was a female Indian American. As she edited her documentary project, Janvi said to herself, "Growing Up Desi. Written, directed, and produced by Janvi Valia." Janvi stated to the audience her position of power behind the camera,

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constituting a political act of subversion in the face of the camera that currently frames her.

Three women were cited in the credits for having worked behind the scenes of *WTPY?* (2003) – an increase in the number of women working on the production of *American Desi*. One headed Casting, one Make-Up, and one female was an executive producer. On-screen, three (Indian-American) women of Indian ethnicity were portrayed: Mo's mother; Hari's love interest, Priya; and Mo's love interest, Janvi. Unlike the mother in *American Desi*, Mo's mother had a line in her first scene when she responded to the father who was upset with their irresponsible son, Mo. While the mother was given a voice from the onset, she was first shown in the kitchen cooking a traditional Indian meal while the father was shown wearing a suit, having just come home from work. She used her voice to defend her son, thereby fulfilling her duty as a protective mother – a traditional Indian ideal as found in Hindi films.

As RQ4 asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films? The first time *WTPY*'s Priya appeared, she was wearing an outrageous outfit, heavy make-up, large sunglasses, and had streaks of bright, unconventional colors in her hair. She tripped and fell into Hari's arms after finding out she was in Advanced Digital Signal Processing, the wrong class. Here, Priya filled the Hindi film stereotype of the Flighty/Ditsy NRI (Non-Resident Indian), found in *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* (Say It's Love) (2000). We heard her voice, but just barely. She whispered to the student next to her, "This isn't Intro. to Fashion Design?" Her flightiness was signified by her ensemble as well as the fact that

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she was lost. More importantly, she was lost in a space dominated by males: the professor, the students sitting beside her. Only three females ware in the background. This patriarchal setting not only illustrated the dearth of females in a technical field but also echoed the scarcity of Indian women behind the camera. As with other less privileged groups, the female of Indian ethnicity is denied audio control (Gaines, 1999).

Like Nina in *American Desi*, the first time Janvi appeared in *WTPY?* she was silent, watched by the protagonist male Mo, and narrated by Indian music. She also moved in slow motion. Just as in Hindi films, her hair was worn long and down with the top part in cornrows. She was made up and wearing a fitted red dress; however, unlike in Hindi films, this Indian-American female was not shown scantily clad. When Mo asked about her, his friend replied, "Oh, man, that's Janvi Valia, man! She's a dime, yo!" The male gaze was upon her twice. Just as with Neena in *American Desi*, we saw Janvi's mouth saying something, but we did not hear her; the music overpowered her. Though there were steps taken in this film that were not taken in *American Desi*, the female Indians in *WTPY?* were still initially shown as "the necessary complement to the male, the opposite against which men struggle for self-definition and manhood" (Gledhill, 1984, p. 23).

In the next scene, however, Janvi's anthropology professor asked her about her project proposal and Janvi explained that she wanted to do a documentary on "the Indian-American experience." This was an interesting moment in Indian-American cinema, because she is an Indian-American female who verbalizes to the white male – normally in the position of power – that she is going to place herself behind the camera. In a rather

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bold and fresh manner, this scene seemed to addressed the one in which we were first introduced to Priya. The technical aspects of media production as well as the normally patriarchal gaze were seized by Janvi as she spoke to her anthropology class about "the emergence of a new culture." Her original idea and powerful presentation subvert the Hindi film industry's Flighty/Ditsy Indian residing outside India (NRI: Non-Resident Indian) stereotype and the dearth of Indian women in Hollywood films. The camera superimposed images of various Indian-American youths sharing their experiences with fellow Indian Americans, Indians, and stereotypes they have had to face. It is important to stress, however, that out of the eight interviews shown in this sequence, six were of males and only two were of females.

While some of these films do indeed address and resist some of the Hindi film stereotypes of Indian-American females, some also reinforce Hindi film storyline patterns and more importantly, Hindi film stereotypes concerning Indian-American females. In most of these films, Indian-American female characters were one-dimensional, almost non-existent, or treated as secondary characters. Because of this, there is not only the danger of maintaining existing stereotypes of Indian-American females, but also the danger of new stereotypes being formed due to the lack of depth and even presence of Indian-American female characters in Indian-American films.

Conclusion

One thing that almost all of these films have in common is the inclusion of Indian immigrant youth characters. This is a clear acknowledgement of the inevitable interaction between Indian immigrant youths and Indian Americans. Hall describes

young black filmmakers as "at the moment very full of ideas and wanting to represent themselves rather than be represented by somebody else" (Watkins, 1998, p. 5). Similarly, though on a much smaller scale, Indian Americans have forged through the powerful medium of film as a way of dealing with not only Hindi film stereotypes of Indian-American females, but Hollywood stereotypes of Indians, American stereotypes of Indians, and Indian parents' stereotypes of their Indian-American youth as well. Of course, progress in these areas takes time. As Mehta pointed out:

> We should be ready to be accepted as Americans. It will be slow. We can't just pretend that tomorrow we can make a Hollywood film with all Indian characters. That's my goal someday; to make a movie with Indian characters and have it be just a regular film. There are other minorities who are much closer to that goal. Latin Americans and Asian Americans may get there first, but South Asian Americans will get there as well (AsiaSource, 2002).

"Popular culture is generally popular because its users are able to derive pleasure from its content. Additionally, it is popular because it draws from and resonates with people's lived experiences" (Watkins, 1998, p. 13). Within popular culture, film as a text not only engages our visual and aural senses but also our sense of identification as producers and/or as spectators. It serves as a vehicle for conveying cultural classification and social values while simultaneously allowing space for addressing issues of national, cultural, and social identity. It is in this way that Indian-American films realize "representation of the social world as an inherently political act" (p. 5).

The following chapter discusses the qualitative analyses of Indian-American immigrant films and second-generation Indian-American films and the results of the

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quantitative analysis of Hindi and Hollywood films within the theoretical framework and

the context of the research questions of this study.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

To analyze Hindi film representations of people of Indian origin residing outside India and Hollywood film representations of people of Indian ethnicity in America, as well as self-representation in Indian-American films, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in this study. Special attention was given to the examination of second-generation Indian-American representation. To answer RQ1, which asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with depictions of Hollywood depictions of Indians in America?, this study quantitatively measured instances and types of representation of people of Indian origin residing outside India in Hindi films and people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films and found that the majority of representations were Indian emigrants in Hindi films and Indian immigrants in Hollywood films. Hindi films were over four times more likely to give lead roles to characters of Indian origin residing outside India than Hollywood films were to give lead roles to characters of Indian ethnicity in America (23% vs. 5%) while the majority of both Hindi film characters of Indian origin (51%) and Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America (57%) were background and speaking roles. The majority of Hindi film characters of Indian origin as well as the majority of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity were given a small fraction of the films' total screen time (up to 5%).

Regarding RQ1a, which asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America socio-

economically?, this study found that the majority of Hindi films depicted characters of

Indian origin as wealthy or upper class (70%); in contrast, Hollywood films did not

emphasize the class of characters of Indian ethnicity because the economic level was

unknown for two-thirds of these characters (67%). Almost three-fifths (57%) of homes

in Hindi films were large or very large, but in Hollywood films, the size of 9 out of 10

homes (90%) could not be determined as the homes were not shown.

RQ1b asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India

compare with Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in terms of culture

and identity? Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were four times

more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India to be

depicted with accents not in accordance with the dominant language of the film (52% vs.

13%). Almost two-fifths (38%) of the type of company of Hindi film characters of

Indian origin was unknown compared to over two-fifths (43%) of the type of company of

Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity. The parents of Hollywood film characters

of Indian ethnicity were more likely than the parents of Hindi film characters of Indian

origin to be shown (86% vs. 68%).

Overall, this study found that over two-fifths (43%) of Hollywood film depictions

of Indians in America were positive or somewhat positive compared to almost one-third

(32%) of Hindi film depictions of Indians residing abroad. Over two-fifths (44%) of

Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India were negative or somewhat

negative compared to almost one-quarter (24%) of Hollywood film depictions of Indians

in America. The content analysis also found that the majority of Hindi film depictions

(66%) and Hollywood film depictions (57%) were stereotypes. In Hollywood films, one-third (33%) of characters of Indian ethnicity were marginalized compared to over one-fourth (28%) of characters of Indian origin in Hindi films, but Hollywood films were more likely than Hindi films to Other characters (29% vs. 17%).

The quantitative method of content analysis was also used to answer RQ2, which asked, how do Hindi and Hollywood films depict second-generation Indian Americans? From the study conducted, it was evident that Hindi films gave more attention to Indian emigrants, particularly those in America, than to second-generation Indian Americans, who were given twelve times less attention. Hollywood films also depicted more Indian immigrants than second-generation Indian Americans. Although Hollywood did portray second-generation Indian Americans four times more than Hindi films, the roles were predominantly background characters. The content analysis also showed that Hollywood films were more likely than Hindi films to portray second-generation Indian characters as assimilated into the dominant culture of the film (86% vs. 27%). Hindi films, however, were more likely than Hollywood films to portray second-generation Indian-American characters as bicultural (40% vs. 0%) and assimilated into the non-dominant culture (33% vs. 0%).

In order to examine representation in Indian-American films, the qualitative methodology of textual analysis was used to answer RQ3, which asked, how are Indian-American culture and identity portrayed and transmitted through the entertainment medium of Indian-American film? Visual cues such as type of clothing, make-up, juxtapositions with other characters, lighting, and many others in addition to aural cues

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such as type of cultural name, dialogues and background music were qualitatively examined. Through the study of such cues, this analysis found that in general, Indian culture was prevalent in Indian-American immigrant films and the Indian immigrant experience was the dominant topic. The study of visual and aural cues also revealed that in general, the portrayal of Indian-American culture was prevalent in second-generation Indian-American films and the second-generation Indian-American experience was the dominant topic.

To answer RQ4, which asked, in terms of transmitting Indian-American images and culture, how do Indian-American films compare with Hindi and Hollywood films?, this study also qualitatively analyzed portrayals of first and second-generation Indian Americans in Indian-American films in comparison to depictions of Indians residing abroad in Hindi films and people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films. Like the Hindi and Hollywood films in this study, Indian-American films made by recent Indian immigrants generally concentrated more on Indian immigrants and less on second-generation Indian Americans. Unlike in Hindi and Hollywood films, however, all types of roles (lead, supporting, background and speaking, etc.) in immigrant films were assigned to immigrant characters while most types of roles were allotted to second-generation Indian-American characters. The analysis also revealed that, like Hindi and Hollywood films, Indian-American immigrant films stereotype, Other, and marginalize members of the non-dominant group; in Indian-American immigrant films, this group most frequently was comprised of second-generation Indian Americans. Unlike Hindi and Hollywood films, however, Indian-American immigrant films did not Other or

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marginalize Indian immigrant characters and only inconsequentially stereotyped Indian immigrant characters.

In contrast to Hindi and Hollywood films, second-generation Indian-American films, allotted all types of roles (lead, supporting, background and speaking, etc.) to second-generation Indian Americans; most roles given to Indian immigrant characters were supporting, background, etc. Like Hindi and Hollywood films, second-generation Indian-American films Othered Indian immigrants; however, unlike Hindi and Hollywood films, second-generation Indian-American films did not marginalize Indian immigrant characters, and instances of stereotyping Indian immigrants were inconsequential. In fact, second-generation Indian-American films depicted non-stereotypical images of Indian immigrants. Although second-generation Indian-American films did stereotype and Other second-generation Indian-American characters, they subverted many of these stereotypes with non-stereotypical images unlike most depictions found in Hindi and Hollywood films. In the comparison of Hindi and Hollywood films with Indian-American films, a significant discovery was that all types of films allotted lead roles primarily to males. Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America were more likely than Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside India to be male (86% vs. 62%). In Indian-American films, almost all of the lead characters were male while female characters were supporting and/or background roles as shown in the qualitative analysis.

Textual analysis was also used to answer RQ5, which asked, how are Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, representing themselves

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and their conflicts, issues, cultural state, socio-economic status, and general condition

through the entertainment medium of film? The qualitative analysis found that,

compared to immigrant films, second-generation Indian-American films focused more on

second-generation Indian Americans as well as cultural assimilation and cultural fusion.

Conflicts and issues specific to second-generation Indian Americans in particular were

highlighted and Indian-American culture was emphasized. The analysis also revealed

that second-generation Indian-American characters were depicted as culturally balanced.

Second-generation Indian-American films did not depict second-generation Indian-

American characters negatively. Although these films portrayed some of the stereotypes

found in Hindi and Hollywood films, most of such depictions were subverted.

Discussion

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the findings, the results were

interpreted within the broad theoretical framework of the transmission of culture and

entertainment (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959). Theories relied upon in the interpretation

of these results were stereotyping (Ramirez Berg, 2002) and the concept of the Other

(Hall, 1992), visual culture (Mirzoeff, 2002; Newton, 2001), and analysis through

feminist perspective (hooks, 1999; Gaines, 1999; Gledhill, 1984).

Hindi Films Rarely Depicted Second-Generation Indian-Americans

As the quantitative analysis showed, second-generation Indian Americans were

rarely portrayed in Hindi films; only 6% of Indian characters residing abroad in Hindi

films were comprised of second-generation Indian Americans. Many Hindi films,

however, often depicted Indians who have left India to reside in Western countries,

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namely the United States of America; such characters were Indian emigrants, also known as Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)[91]. Differentiating between Indian Americans and second-generation Indian Americans was important because it was obvious in anthropological studies (Bacon, 1999; Agarwal, 1991) and the qualitative portion of this study that cultural experiences and negotiations differ between Indians who have migrated from India and second-generation Indian Americans. This being said, it is important to note that when Hindi films depicted Indians residing outside India, distinctions that had to do with identity were either overtly dismissed or simply not addressed. Consequently, by grouping Indian emigrants with second-generation Indian Americans, a generalized image of people of Indian origin residing outside India was created. Also important to note was the Hindi film industry's use of juxtaposition to further establish the dominance of the hero, often an Indian residing in India or one choosing to reside in India. As the quantitative results showed, juxtaposed against the Indian hero in Hindi films were Othered and marginalized characters, frequently Indian emigrants, and occasionally, as they were sparingly portrayed, second-generation Indian Americans.

One possible yet overly simplistic explanation for the lack of second-generation Indian Americans in Hindi films was that the Hindi film industry used Hindi as its primary language whereas the primary language of second-generation Indian Americans is English; therefore, perhaps the Hindi film industry's judgment was that it would not make sense to portray Indian-American characters born and raised abroad. The problem

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[91] In fact, the Indian government groups Indian emigrants to all countries and all generations born outside India thereafter into one category: the NRI, and the Hindi film industry appears to be following suit.

with this explanation, however, is that the Hindi film industry has a longstanding tendency to bend the rules of technical reality so this type of accuracy regarding this issue is not plausible. A more likely reason, in light of this study's results, was that the Hindi film industry regarded all people of Indian origin living outside India (all labeled as Non-Resident Indians in Hindi films), as the same – whether they were born in a country other than India or recently migrated. For example, in Hindi film *Mujhse Dosti Karoge?* (2003), Indian character Tina kept referring to England-returned Rohan as "Mr. America;" when "NRI" Rohan pointed out to her that he had been in England and not America, Tina dismissively said, "Mr. America! London, America, who cares?! [what difference does it make?]"[92] The statement that there was no difference simply cultivates gross generalizations and undue categorizations (Severin & Tankard, 1997) which perpetuates stereotyping (Ramirez Berg, 2002; Severin and Tankard, 1997). Furthermore, if, for the Hindi film industry, making the distinction as to which country an Indian has ventured is inconsequential, then the Hindi film industry most likely will not feel compelled to distinguish or even portray second-generation Indian Americans.

While it may be unreasonable to expect the Hindi film industry, an industry based on the other side of the world, to provide adequate representation for second-generation Indian Americans, this does not mitigate the kind of negative representation allotted to second-generation Indian-American characters in Hindi films, such as *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back) (1999) and *Pardes* (Foreign Country) (1997) in which second-

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[92] It would be a great declaration had this statement been made in order to convey a message of unity – that no matter where one migrates, he will always be Indian and that is what matters; unfortunately, this was not the context; it was a statement that illustrated her flippant attitude and that she was not impressed that he worked and lived abroad.

generation Indian-American characters were depicted according to the textual analysis

with vices (drinking, smoking, using foul language, and being disrespectful) and

portrayed as cold, status-conscious, morally lacking, and astoundingly materialistic. The

two most prominent of these characters did not transform, did not marry Indians (did not

marry at all), and were banished from the Indian family sphere. In fact, one character

was denounced in front of the Indian community by his own father, who yelled at him in

English, "Get lost, and go back to America!" Important to note is that these three Hindi

film depictions of second-generation Indian Americans were the most prominent

stereotypical depictions in the Hindi films examined in the qualitative analysis. The

finding that depictions of second-generation Indian Americans in Hindi films were sparse

was compounded by the fact that the most prominent depictions were negative and

fashioned by one of the two most famous and prolific film industries in the world. As the

qualitative analysis showed, such negative depictions of second-generation Indian

Americans were addressed in second-generation Indian-American films and will also be

discussed later in this chapter.

Hollywood Films Scarcely Depicted Second-Generation Indian Americans

Out of the four types of films examined in this study, Hollywood films were the

only ones that scarcely covered people of Indian ethnicity, let alone gave attention to the

nuances of each of the cultural subgroups. As the quantitative analysis showed, 24% of

characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films were second-generation Indian

Americans while 57% Indians from abroad. In other words, when depicting people of

Indian ethnicity, Hollywood films were more likely to portray Indian immigrants than

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second-generation Indian Americans. The statistic stipulating the percentage of second-generation Indian-American characters in Hollywood films, however, should be interpreted within its proper context. Out of this sample of Hollywood films that portrayed characters of Indian ethnicity in America, 24% of the characters of Indian ethnicity depicted were comprised of second-generation Indian Americans. Like the Hindi film industry, Hollywood, with the exception of one film, did not make a concerted effort to depict second-generation Indian-American characters. Only one Hollywood film examined in this study had a character of Indian descent as a lead character. In fact, as far the research has shown, *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004) was the only Hollywood film that had a second-generation Indian American as a lead, and even in this film, he (Kal Penn) was a co-lead. With the exception of this one film, the Hollywood films analyzed in this study stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized (Ramirez Berg, 2002; Hall, 1992) characters of Indian ethnicity and hardly portrayed second-generation Indian-American characters. If characters of Indian ethnicity were depicted, they – like other minorities in Hollywood films – were ""too ethnic" [meaning] not completely assimilated, not American enough" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 55) and in the case of characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films: too Indian. With such depictions of second-generation Indian Americans, the Hollywood film industry is yet another form of mass communication (in addition to news media) (Sreenivasan, 1998) that is overlooking the Indian-American population and its significance. Furthermore, Hollywood depictions of characters of Indian ethnicity that were "too ethnic" only emphasized the presence,

however scarce, of an entirely separate subgroup, attributes of which were applied to all subgroups thus leading to stereotyping.

Hindi Films Stereotyped, Othered, and Marginalized Indians Outside India and Hollywood Films Stereotyped, Othered, and Marginalized Indians In America

As the quantitative results have shown, two-thirds (66%) of Hindi film depictions of Indian residing outside India were stereotypical, over one-fourth (28%) were marginalized, and 17% were Othered. The marginalization of Indian emigrant characters provided further opportunity to stereotype; not only was very little importance given to such characters, little time was allotted for the development of these characters thus rendering their depictions even more susceptible to being stereotyped. An epitomizing example of such a portrayal was that of an Indian emigrant character in Hindi film *Phir Milenge* (We'll Meet Again) (2004). This character was given little screen time but was given significance as the one who infected the heroine with the AIDS virus and then was later eliminated. Although this film was hailed for raising awareness in India about HIV and AIDS, the question regarding Indian emigrant representation glaringly remains: why was the character that infected the heroine with the AIDS virus an Indian emigrant – an "NRI" as the Hindi film industry would call him? The narrative could have easily functioned with him never having left India to pursue his dreams and settle in America. Such portrayals only serve to establish and reinforce stereotypes of Indian emigrants; this in turn also affects the undue categorization (Severin & Tankard, 1997) of second-generation Indian Americans (as they were often regarded by the Hindi film industry as the same). As mentioned earlier, the Hindi film industry is the most prolific film industry in the world; therefore, it is critical to note the perpetual production of stereotypical and

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marginalizing images. Watkins emphasized, "the constantly shifting and vigorous fields of culture, representation, and ideology are material forces insofar as they perform a powerful role in the production of society" (Watkins, 1998, p. 18). These "forces" are transmissions of culture that "perform a powerful role in the production of society." As Wright explained, the transmission of culture, or transmission of social heritage, functions as a means of education (1986), an activity of communication, concerned with "assimilation" and "social roles" (p. 5). By stereotyping and marginalizing Indian characters residing outside India, the Hindi film industry is presenting and perpetuating certain images of people of Indian origin residing outside India ("NRIs") to millions of audience members of the dominant culture of these films.

According to the Hindi films examined in this study, generally two ideological types of Indians residing outside India exist: the Westernized Indian and the Indian at Heart – stereotypes addressed in second-generation Indian-American films. It is noteworthy that the Westernized Indian and Indian at Heart categories were ideological opposites of each other. This dichotomy was telling in that it delineated the Us-Them boundary (Ramirez Berg, 2002) but with some modification. The We or the Us was represented by the dominant culture of the film. In Hindi films of this study, the dominant culture was Indian culture and the Us was comprised of Indians – those of the dominant culture. The Them referred to the marginalized culture – Western culture and/or the Westernized Indian. The Westernized Indian embodied an Indian emigrant or second-generation Indian American who has embraced and/or strongly identified with Western culture. According to the cultural climate of the Hindi film, such a character has

integrated himself too well into Western society. One who was Indian at Heart was someone, often an Indian emigrant, who retained his "Indianness" – perhaps, for example, one who longed to return to India. Sometimes a grand transformation of the Westernized Indian into Indian at Heart took place. These Hindi film stereotypes of Indian emigrants and second-generation Indian Americans were juxtaposed against the Indian protagonists, members who embodied true "Indianness." Because these two categories in particular, the Westernized Indian and Indian at Heart, were presented as opposites (e.g.: Rajiv vs. Arjun in *Pardes*), the message seemed to be saying either the character was one of Us or one of Them (Ramirez Berg, 2002). Ideologically, the message was that deep down inside certain Indians residing outside India were "Indian;" in the context of Hindi films, this meant the cultural identity (values, behaviors, preferences) of the Indian residing abroad was thoroughly – and preferably exclusively – Indian. Through a change, however, or some sort of catharsis, it was possible for the Westernized Indian to realize that he was indeed Indian at Heart, and therefore, like. Such categorical depictions not only led to undue categorization and stereotyping (Severin & Tankard, 1997; Ramirez Berg, 2002) but also left little space for the concept of Indian-American culture.

RQ1b asked, how do Hindi film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in terms of culture and identity? Such depictions of Indian emigrants and second-generation Indian Americans portrayed in Hindi films and characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films were substantiated through visual and aural cues (Ramirez Berg, 2002). For example, a

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significant variable in the analysis of Indians residing abroad in Hindi films and people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films was the accent of a character. In Hindi films, 85% of characters of Indian origin were depicted with accents in accordance with Hindi, the dominant language of these films, while 13% were portrayed with accents that were not in accordance with Hindi[93]. The accent of a character was an important factor to note because it provided an opportunity to underscore difference; it served as a cue that could indicate a character's Otherness (Ramirez Berg, 2002; Pham, 2004). In Hindi films, accents that were not in accordance with Hindi (the dominant language) denoted dissimilarity and connoted cultural ineptitude as demonstrated in Hindi films such as *Kaho Na… Pyaar Hai* (Say It's Love) (2000).

Hollywood films, however, were more likely to attribute to characters of Indian ethnicity an accent that was not in accordance with the dominant language than Hindi films were to assign accents to characters of Indian origin residing abroad. In fact, the quantitative analysis revealed that a majority of characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films were shown with an accent, an attribute that second-generation Indian Americans do not have. This was a significant finding in that it provided another reason why Indian Americans are representing themselves. In fact, Hollywood films depicted over half (53%) of the characters of Indian ethnicity with accents not in accordance with the dominant language's accent. In Hollywood films, an accent not in accordance with the dominant accent was also a feature that served to distinguish the marginal from the mainstream; this significant statistic verified the Othering of characters of Indian

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[93] It is important to note that Hindi films primarily use Hindi and try to curb the use of English for audience purposes and therefore, will sacrifice some realism for easier communication.

ethnicity. Some examples included Indian characters such as Ben Jabituya (Fisher Stevens)[94] in *Short Circuit* (1986), Samir Nagheenanajar (Ajay Naidu) in *Office Space* (1999), Taj Mahal (Kal Penn) in *National Lampoon's Van Wilder* (2002), and Gupta Rajan (Kumar Pallana) in *The Terminal* (2004). Consistent portrayals of characters of Indian ethnicity with Indian accents when used without any relevance not only Others characters of Indian descent in Hollywood films but also generalizes people of Indian ethnicity consequently leading to stereotypes while simultaneously disregarding the existence of an entire generation of Indian Americans born and/or raised in America. These depictions of characters of Indian ethnicity were transmissions of Hollywood's shallow interpretation of who comprised the population of people of Indian ethnicity in America.

RQ1a asked, how do Hind film depictions of Indians residing outside India compare with Hollywood film depictions of Indians in America socio-economically? As the quantitative analysis showed, visual cues were used to convey social and economic status as well. A significant part of the visual culture of Hindi films, the home serves as a major sign of the prosperity and socio-economic status of the character. In the culture of Hindi films, the home is a source of pride, a stamp of accomplishment; selling it is often a sign of economic despair. The quantitative analysis found Hindi films are more likely than Hollywood films to portray the homes of Indian characters residing abroad as large or very large (57%). In Hollywood films, 10% of the homes of people of Indian ethnicity were very large; even more conspicuous, however, was that 90% of the homes of

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[94] It is important to note that actor Fisher Stevens is not of Indian ethnicity.

characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films were not shown at all. As clarified by

the quantitative results for the screen time variable, characters of Indian ethnicity often

were not given significant roles; therefore, it was less likely that the viewer would be

invited to see the characters' homes. Such aspects factored into the marginalization of

Indian characters in Hollywood films. By not showing the space in which characters of

Indian ethnicity lived their personal lives, Hollywood dissociated people of Indian

ethnicity from the personal sphere recalling the stereotype of the model minority that

worked diligently and quietly and were seen most often in the workplace (Paek and Shah,

2003) and hardly in the domestic sphere.

This study also found that 70% of characters of Indian characters residing abroad

in Hindi films were depicted as wealthy (49) or upper class (21). This telling statistic

revealed the contours of stereotypes and undue classification (Ramirez Berg, 2002;

Severin & Tankard, 1997) of Indians residing abroad in Hindi films. As Paek and Shah

explained, statistics regarding the economic standing of Asian Americans can be

misleading as the socio-economic status varies so much from sub-category to sub-

category within the Asian-American group (Paek & Shah, 2003). By depicting 70% of

characters of Indian origin residing outside India as wealthy or upper class, Hindi films

perpetuated the stereotype that people of Indian origin residing outside India are affluent

– a stereotype that has the power to adversely affect Indians' perceptions of people of

Indian origin residing outside India (Paek & Shah, 2003), particularly in light of Wright's

(1986) theory of the transmission of culture as a form of education. It is interesting to

note that at the other end of the spectrum of such portrayals was Hollywood's

representation (or lack) of the economic classification of people of Indian ethnicity. In Hollywood films, over two-thirds (67%) of Indian characters' economic status was unknown. This fact points directly toward the sparse attention given to characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films and further highlights the industry's marginalization (Ramirez Berg, 2002) of people of Indian ethnicity in America.

Although seemingly insignificant, the type of company/circle of friends variable can encourage further "undue classification" (Severin & Tankard, 1997) of Hindi film characters of Indian origin residing outside Indian and Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity in America. In Hindi films, the type of company of an Indian character residing abroad often signified the character's level of social values and cultural status (Ramirez Berg, 2002). In the Hollywood films examined in this study, the character's type of company served as a sign that helped establish the Indian character as an Other in juxtaposition to protagonists of the dominant race and culture (Ramirez Berg, 2002). The type of company of Hollywood film characters of Indian ethnicity was more likely than the type of company of Hindi film characters of Indian origin to be unknown (43% vs. 38%). This finding was important as it illustrated what often was *not* there – nuances that give characters more depth and dimension.

Overall, this study found that Hindi film depictions of people of Indian origin residing abroad were rated fairly evenly across Positive (21%), Negative (23%), and Neutral (25%) while Hollywood film depictions of people of Indian ethnicity in America were rated as Positive (5%), Negative (10%), and Neutral (33%). The overall ratings of these depictions, however, must be read within their proper contexts. In terms of screen

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time allotted to such characters, Hindi films portrayed Indians residing abroad for more than half of the films' total screen time five times more often than Hollywood films, which 62% of the time, depicted people of Indian ethnicity with screen times of a mere fraction of the films' total screen time (less than 5%). By stereotyping, Othering, and marginalizing people of Indian origin residing outside India and people of Indian ethnicity in America, Hindi and Hollywood films gave more reason for second-generation Indian Americans to represent themselves in their own cinema.

As delineated in chapter 3, the development of the Indian film industry during colonial times mirrored the cultural development of a newly independent India; through its film melodrama, it also provided an arena of opportunity for expressing nationalism, portraying cultural values, and exploring the issue of traditionalism versus modernity. The entertainment medium of film thereby served as a function of communication, the transmission of culture (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959). Similarly, Indian diaspora films, particularly Indian-American films, were experimenting by representing pressing issues, such as generational conflict, biculturalism, assimilation, and Indian-American culture.

Indian-American Immigrant Films Primarily Focused On Indian Immigrants and Adhered to Hindi Film Stereotypes and Melodrama When Attempting to Address Second-Generation Indian Americans

The qualitative portion of this study found that Indian-American films made by Indian immigrants focused more on immigrant experiences and were also more like Hindi films in that their approach was decidedly melodramatic. Two films in particular – *ABCD* (1999) and *Wings of Hope* (2001) – adhered to some Hindi film stereotypes of people of Indian origin residing outside India. An example of one of these stereotypes

was the Westernized Indian, who displayed undesirable qualities such as excessive drinking and promiscuity/pre-marital sex. The Transformed Indian was another Hindi film stereotype that was used in these two Indian-American immigrant films as well. Nina in *ABCD* (1999), as well as Kaajal and Ravi in *Wings of Hope* (2001), all displayed behavioral extremes and excesses. After suffering considerable tribulations brought on by their own decisions to not heed their Indian parents' advice, both Kaajal and Ravi transformed; Nina, on the other hand, did not transform and therefore, was left wondering if she made the right decision by not listening to her mother, who wanted her to marry an Indian man.

As the qualitative analysis has shown, Indian-American films made by Indian immigrants have given some attention to second-generation Indian Americans; however, it is important to note that when these roles were lead or co-lead, they were stereotypes and generally negative or otherwise secondary and/or minor. As mentioned in the qualitative analysis, characters Nina and Raj of the film *ABCD* (1999) were not born in America and therefore were not technically second-generation Indian-American characters; they were the protagonists of the film – information that supports the finding that Indian-American films made by Indian immigrants focus on Indian immigrants (although these characters were classified by the film as American-born.) In fact, in *Flavors* (2004), all the characters, lead and supporting, as well as background, were Indian immigrants. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why this film as a cinematic work of representation was successful – because it focused on one subgroup with which the film's creators were familiar and identified; they were representing themselves.

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Giving attention to one specific subgroup allowed for the film to focus on the diversity within the subgroup; this, in turn, led to broader representation within the group and minimized the likelihood of stereotyping.

Immigrant Indian-American films that did include second-generation Indian-American characters, however, tended to adhere to Hindi film stereotypes of Indians residing abroad. Interestingly, these Hindi film stereotypes were applied in immigrant films to second-generation Indian American characters, such as *Wings of Hope*'s (2001) temperamental, alcoholic law school dropout and ex-con and his rebellious second-generation Indian-American ex-girlfriend, *Green Card Fever*'s (2003) "unfit to be Indian" Om, and *Indian Fish In American Water*'s (2003) exploitive and manipulative Bobby. These depictions recalled the several variables examined in the quantitative analysis – disposition, family interaction, values, vices, and types of excesses. These second-generation Indian-American characters displayed behavior and vices that were looked down upon as depicted by the stereotypes used by the Hindi film industry. Again, this study found that portrayals of second-generation Indian-American characters in immigrant Indian-American films were reminiscent of Hindi film stereotypical depictions of Indians living abroad, such as the Westernized Indian, Indian at Heart, and the Transformed Indian. These Hindi film stereotypes, initially transmitted through the entertainment mass medium of Hindi films, have (re)surfaced in Indian-American films made by Indian immigrants, thus supporting Lasswell (1948) and Wright's (1959) theory of the transmission of culture, or the transmission of social heritage, as a form of education. Indian immigrant filmmakers have taken Hindi film stereotypes applied to

Indian emigrants and second-generation Indian Americans, removed themselves (Indian emigrants) from this equation in their effort to represent themselves, and in many cases have directed the stereotyping, Othering, and marginalization towards second-generation Indian Americans. The qualitative analysis has shown that overall, although immigrant Indian-American films did include second-generation Indian-American characters, these roles were indeed secondary to immigrant characters and were not only inadequate, but they echoed Hindi film stereotypes of people of Indian origin residing outside India as well.

Second-Generation Indian-American Films Focused On Second-Generation Indian Americans; Self-Expression Was Transmitted Through Film as a Means of Self-Representation

As the qualitative analysis has shown, Indian-American films that were made mostly by second-generation Indian Americans concentrated on second-generation storylines and Indian-American culture. The second-generation Indian-American films analyzed in this study displayed a kind of diversity that Hindi and Hollywood films chose to ignore when regarding Indian-American characters, particularly second-generation Indian-American characters. Through the portrayal of a variety of personalities and individual interests in second-generation Indian-American films, the portrait of Indian Americans was given multiple shades and nuances that precluded the stereotyping, automatic categorization, Othering, and marginalization (Severin & Tankard, 1997; Ramirez Berg, 2002) of Indian Americans found in the quantitative study of Hindi and Hollywood films. Second-generation Indian-American films responded to the Hindi and

Hollywood film stereotyping, Othering, and marginalization of people of Indian origin residing outside India and people of Indian ethnicity respectively.

Regarding the scarcity of representation in Hollywood, it is clear that all of the Indian-American films examined in this study have taken action just with their mere existence. In terms of stereotypes, this study found that one of the most noticeable features of Indian-American films was simply that not every character of Indian ethnicity had an Indian accent. This addressed a seemingly minor but palpable characteristic found in characters of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films. As mentioned earlier, by assigning an accent to a character of Indian ethnicity, Hollywood not only Othered the character if the accent was there without a reason (Pham, 2004) but generalized people of Indian ethnicity and disregarded a generation of Indian Americans born and raised in America. Referring to Indian-American actors in Hollywood films, Mehta said of Ajay Naidu, "Ajay is straight out of Chicago, so to make someone like that put on an accent is odd" (www.asiasource.org/arts/americanchai.cfm). As Pham's study emphasized, in *Rush Hour* (1998), Jackie Chan's character, Lee, was Othered because he was not playing an Asian American (Pham, 2004). Similarly, characters of Indian ethnicity in America were Othered in Hollywood films through this aural cue as were characters of Indian origin residing outside India in Hindi films. Indian-American films, particularly second-generation Indian-American films, by including characters without accents – that is, second-generation Indian-American characters – have provided representation for an underrepresented population in America.

The Indian-American films that have effectively responded to Hindi as well as Hollywood films' stereotypical depictions were those of the comedy genre as shown in the taxonomy. The use of humor as a subversion tactic in these films was very effective. It allowed for the addressing of serious topics without sounding like a sermon. In these films, humor also made room for different points of view from the audience's standpoint and allowed for audience members to form their own opinions regarding social issues that were brought to the forefront through the use of humor. *American Desi* (2001), *American Chai* (2002), and *Where's the Party, Yaar?* (2003) and to some degree, *Ball and Chain* (2004), have particularly excelled at addressing Hindi and Hollywood film stereotypes and misrepresentation.

This study found that the main Hindi (and immigrant) film stereotypes second-generation Indian-American films subverted were the Westernized Indian and the Transformed Indian. Major Hollywood stereotypes that second-generation Indian-American films addressed were the Socially Inept Indian, the Buffoon, and the generalization that all people of Indian ethnicity in America were immigrants with accents. Supporting characters in *American Desi* (2001) were commendable for addressing stereotypes found in Hindi, Hollywood, and immigrant films simultaneously. For example, the character of second-generation Indian-American Ajay (Kal Penn) was not only a fitting response to Buffoon characters like Al (Alpesh) of Indian-American immigrant film *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003), but also to Hollywood's stereotypical depictions of people of Indian ethnicity that had accents and were not assimilated (Ramirez Berg, 2002). *American Desi*'s depiction of a second-generation

Indian American who was in tune with Indian culture refuted Hindi film stereotypes of Indians born and/or raised outside India. Most importantly, it allowed for the image of an Indian American who was familiar with two cultures and adapted and blended them together rather than a character who embraced one culture at the denial of another. As this study discovered, in Hollywood films, people of Indian ethnicity in America were often Othered by an Indian accent or Othered by being "too Indian" while in Hindi films, Indian characters born and/or raised abroad were often Othered for being "too Western" or not "Indian enough," and in immigrant Indian-American films, were often shown as Buffoons, like Al and Rush in *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003) (Ramirez Berg, 2002). The analysis found that second-generation Indian-American films, however, not only dispelled such dichotomous representations, they transmitted images of second-generation Indian Americans that subverted such stereotypes.

American Chai (2002) was one of the second-generation Indian-American films that subverted a variety of Hindi, Hollywood, and Indian-American immigrant film stereotypes, misrepresentations, and overall lack of representation across variables regarding economic status, social status, and cultural status. *American Chai* was also the first film to afford a simple sketch of the basic background of a second-generation Indian American and define the term, Indian American. Protagonist Sureel narrated, "I was born in America which makes me American. My parents were born in India which makes me Indian American." By presenting this information, *American Chai* effectively established the framework for Sureel's story. Secondly, for audience members unfamiliar with the term Indian American, this succinct definition coupled with the film's use of childhood

scenes provided needed context for an enhanced understanding of the cultural nuances (transmission of culture) portrayed throughout the film (entertainment). Finally, through the narration of the second-generation Indian-American protagonist, the second-generation Indian-American population was given a voice for the first time. Not only was *American Chai* the first of its genre to include scenes of an Indian-American character's childhood, but it was also the first to address issues of cultural identity labels. When protagonist Sureel told the neighborhood children, "I'm an Indian," he was then asked, "What tribe are you from?" This short and simple dialogue was incredibly groundbreaking as it not only explored the development of issues concerning cultural labels, it even touched upon the absurd, but sadly common, confusion about the term Indian; once again, the transmission of culture transpired through the entertainment medium of film (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959).

Having established some background on how Sureel was raised, *American Chai* confronted through its visual culture (Mirzoeff, 2003) the Hindi film stereotype that Indians residing abroad were wealthy. Indian-American characters were shown wearing everyday clothing, living in an average-looking house, and none of the Indian characters were shown driving expensive cars, as shown in Hindi films. This study found that Hindi film stereotypes dispelled in *American Chai* were the Westernized Indian and the Culturally Inept Indian. Hollywood stereotypes about people of Indian origin – such as the Socially Inept Indian – were also subverted in this film. Stereotypical Hollywood film characters like scientist and robotics engineer Ben of *Short Circuit*, software tech Sameer of *The Office*, and unnamed, non-English-speaking or socially inept, English-

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speaking characters with accents were debunked by second-generation Indian-American characters like Sureel, who was depicted as a music major (as opposed to something in the sciences), with a girlfriend, many friends, and with his own band, all cues that signified his social aptitude.

This study found that *American Chai* not only confronted and subverted Hindi and Hollywood film stereotypes of second-generation Indian Americans, the film also took the time to give a voice to recent Indian immigrants in particular. Through its depictions and exploration of second-generation Indian-American characters' interactions with Indian immigrant characters, *American Chai* accomplished many important feats. Unlike Hindi and Hollywood films, it showcased the diversity of the Indian population residing outside India, thereby dismantling the cultural and social stereotypes of second-generation Indian Americans and other Indians residing outside India. A worthy example of such a depiction was that of Indian immigrant character Hari (Ajay Naidu) and his interactions with Sureel. Mehta did an excellent job of portraying an archetype versus a stereotype (Ramirez Berg, 2002) by giving this character personal dimensions, something that Hollywood films neglected to do. Mehta utilized the entertainment medium of film to paint a deeper portrait of an Indian immigrant in America. Such nuances, ranging from simple dialogues to showing viewers the homes of such characters, added dimension to second-generation Indian-American and Indian characters; these characters, in turn, revealed diversity and led to the breaking of stereotypes, particularly those found in Hollywood films and other American media.

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Although second-generation Indian-American films were pioneering in many ways, they were not without their shortcomings. For example, in *American Desi* (2001), protagonist second-generation Indian-American Kris was portrayed as the Hindi film industry's Westernized Indian and Culturally Inept Indian stereotypes but eventually transformed somewhat, lending an air of realism to the transformation in contrast to the overnight change often depicted in Hindi films; however, a major criticism of this film, was that, as with Reena in *Chutney Popcorn* (1999), it was disconcerting to see how disinterested and disconnected the protagonist of the film was with Indian culture. Both Kris and Reena were surrounded by the Indian community, yet even the slightest knowledge of Indian culture seemed to have escaped both of these characters completely. While *Chutney Popcorn* writer/director Nisha Ganatra has emphasized that one of her goals was: "to not make a film about the Indian-American experience" (*Eye Weekly*, 2000), perhaps Ganatra went a little too far to dissociate the protagonist from Indian culture. Pandya, on the other hand, claimed in an interview that "he [Kris] goes through a lot of the experiences I went through" (www.upperstall.com/americandesi.html). Perhaps because *American Desi* was one of the first films to portray Indian-American youth, or perhaps because of the heavy impact Hindi films have had on Pandya as emphasized in his interview, the character of Kris still conformed a little too well to the Hindi film stereotype of the self-loathing and culturally inept second-generation Indian American as did *Chutney Popcorn*'s culturally inept Reena. Some of their lines simply rendered the characters' ignorance too far-fetched to find amusing. Overall, however, the creators of these films must be commended for their vision and enterprising efforts for

creating the first Indian-American films to focus primarily on characters that were

second-generation Indian Americans when Hindi, Hollywood and even Indian-American

immigrant films have for the most part neglected to do so. One major aspect that all

these types of films, including second-generation Indian-American films (with the

exception of *Chutney Popcorn*), shared, however, was that they were all remiss in

portraying female characters with pivotal roles.

The Majority of Indian Characters Residing Abroad In Hindi Films, Characters of Indian Ethnicity In Hollywood Films, and Characters In Indian-American Films Were Male

In their depictions of Indians residing outside India and people of Indian ethnicity

respectively, Hindi and Hollywood films portrayed more males than females. According

to the quantitative portion of this study, 86% of characters of Indian ethnicity in

Hollywood films were male while 62% of Hindi film characters were male. With the

exception of *ABCD* (1999), all the protagonists in immigrant Indian-American films were

male. Although *ABCD* (1999) did portray a female protagonist, it is important to note

that she was not the sole protagonist; a leading role was also afforded to a male, who was

shown more in the workplace than the female was. The female character Nina was

shown more in personal and intimate scenarios and in the domestic sphere than the male

character, Raj, thereby recalling the stereotype of Asian-American woman as "the petite

and exotic beauty" (Paek and Shah, 2003, p. 236). In this manner, *ABCD* (1999)

succumbed to the stereotypical depictions of minority women in American media (Paek

and Shah, 2003; Larson, 1994).

When women were shown in these films, their roles were secondary. Some examples of specifically second-generation Indian-American female characters in immigrant films included the second-generation Indian-American Bharathi, the love interest of Indian (recent) immigrant Murali in *Green Card Fever* (2003), and second-generation Indian-American Megha of *Indian Fish in American Waters* (2003), the love interest of Indian (recent) immigrant Naveen. Both of these female characters filled supporting roles that were shown in juxtaposition to male counterparts, "the necessary complement[s] to the male[s]" (Gaines, 1984, p.23), as also shown in Hindi films such as *Om Jai Jagdish* (2002). Another secondary female character that recalled a Hindi film stereotype of Indian-American women was Rush (Rushmi) in *Indian Fish In American Waters* (2003). As delineated in the qualitative portion of this study, Rush served as a supporting character to normalize Megha and to render Megha a second-generation Indian American worthy of Indian (immigrant) Naveen; juxtaposing buffoon Rush against Megha Others Rush while establishing Megha as acceptable enough to marry Naveen. In *Wings of Hope* (2001), Kaajal also had a secondary role as Ravi's love interest while Ravi was the protagonist of the film. In contrast to Kaajal was Ravi's sister, Reena, a positive depiction of a second-generation Indian-American female, who was following in her father's footsteps to become a doctor; unfortunately, she was shown sparingly in the film. Kaajal, on the other hand, who was given much more screen time, was shown drinking alcohol, staying out late against her parents' wishes, rebelling against her parents by dating Ravi, and becoming pregnant by another man after her breakup with Ravi.

Comparatively, second-generation Indian-American films did make a noticeable attempt to fight Hindi and Indian-American immigrant film stereotypes of second-generation Indian-American women. For example, in *American Desi* (2001), heroine Neena, the love interest of protagonist Kris, was a fitting response to the Hindi film stereotypes of Indian-American women as culturally inept and overly westernized. The character of Neena was a dignified response to Hindi film stereotypes of Indian females residing outside India[95]. In *American Desi*, when an Indian character, said (thinking that *American Desi*'s Neena would not understand Hindi), "It looks like a girl's about to get picked up," Neena immediately fired back in Hindi, "But this girl isn't some easy target about to get picked up and duped." Neena's character was a portrayal that rebuked Hindi film *Khabhie Khushi Khabhi Gham*'s (2001) boy-crazy "NRI" Tina. *American Desi* 's Indian-American Neena, on the other hand, was shown spurning over-zealous men and not just in English – in Hindi.

The most memorable depiction of a second-generation Indian-American female was that of Janvi Valia in Indian-American film *Where's the Party, Yaar?* (2003). Although initially shown as "the necessary complement to the male" (Gledhill, 1984, p. 23), Janvi was portrayed as an intelligent and independent college student, who conducted a documentary on "the emergence of a new culture." The interviews she conducted for the documentary confronted the several stereotypes that Indian Americans face; these interviews provided two significant moments in Indian-American cinema.

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[95] Such as the overly made-up and flighty Anita of *Kaho Na…Pyaar Hai* (Say It's Love) (2000), the scantily-clad and morally lacking Loveleen of *Ab Ab Laut Chalen* (Come, Let's Go Back) (1999), and spoiled brat Neetu of *Om Jai Jagdish* (2002).

First, an Indian-American female took the reins of the camera and became the voyeur rather than the one who is framed or looked at (Gledhill, 1984). Second, Janvi was utilizing the medium of film to document "the Indian-American experience" as she called it. As significant as this cinematic moment was, however, it was unfortunate that Janvi was given markedly less screen time than her male counterparts. Even clips of her documentary on "the Indian-American experience" revealed that six out of eight interviews were of males while only two were of females.

It is also important to note that generational conflicts in most Indian-American films tended to be between the father and child, while the mother played a negligible role, and at best a mediator. With the exception of *Chutney Popcorn* (1999), this was glaringly apparent in *American Desi* (2001), *Where's the Party, Yaar?* (2003), and *American Chai* (2002) and *Ball and Chain* (2004). Though a small part, the mother near the end of *American Chai* did break the Hollywood stereotype of the submissive (Asian) (Paek and Shah, 2003) Indian wife by supporting her son despite her husband's disapproval; however, the mother was given very few lines throughout the entire film. In general, the stories told thus far tended in Indian-American films to center on the conflict between the Indian-American (male) child and Indian father. Considering the dearth of second-generation Indian-American female representation in Hindi films and Indian women in Hollywood films, more female representation in Indian-American films is anticipated.

Overall, key findings of this study were: 1) Hindi films rarely depicted second-generation Indian Americans. 2) Hollywood films scarcely depicted second-generation

Indian Americans. 3) Hindi films stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized Indians residing outside India and Hollywood films stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized people of Indian ethnicity. 4) Indian-American films mostly by immigrants primarily focused on Indian immigrants. Indian-American immigrant films adhered to Hindi film stereotypes and melodrama when attempting to address second-generation Indian Americans. 5) Indian-American films by mostly second-generation Indian Americans focused on second-generation Indian Americans: self-representation. 6) The majority of characters in Hindi films and Indian characters in Hollywood films were male. The majority of Indian-American characters in Indian-American films – both immigrant and second-generation – was also male.

Conclusion

As the quantitative and qualitative results of this study have shown, second-generation Indian Americans were rarely portrayed in Hindi and Hollywood films. Indians who migrated abroad, that is, Indian emigrants, were portrayed in Hindi films; however, they were often stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized. The quantitative analysis also revealed that in Hollywood films, when people of Indian ethnicity were shown, they were also stereotyped, Othered, and marginalized. Such characters were frequently portrayed with an accent, an attribute that second-generation Indian Americans do not have. This, in turn, highlighted the Hollywood stereotype that people of Indian descent were *only* immigrants; this gross generalization disregards the existence of second-generation Indian Americans.

The qualitative portion of this study found that although second-generation Indian Americans were depicted in Indian-American immigrant films, their roles, if lead were mostly negative, and otherwise were secondary and minor; second-generation Indian-American characters were marginalized and depictions of them were often in accordance with Hindi film stereotypes of Indian characters residing outside India. Second-generation Indian-American films also reflected the diversity of the Indian-American community. These films not only showcased a variety of second-generation Indian-American characters, but they also confronted Hollywood stereotypes of people of Indian ethnicity in America, thereby providing a collective voice for the Indian-American community at large. Second-generation Indian-American films also reflected the evolution of Indian-American culture and concepts of cultural amalgamation and cultural fusion. Although few in number, second-generation Indian-American films managed to illustrate a variety of subcultural identities, thereby confronting Hindi film stereotypes and misrepresentation and addressing the dearth of Indian and second-generation Indian-American representation in Hollywood films.

Overall, the production of Indian-American films fulfilled a need to express and self-represent both the immigrant experience and second-generation Indian-American experience and cultural identity. This was due in part to the inordinate stereotypical depictions of Indian emigrants in Hindi films as well as the Hindi films industry's scant and negative portrayals of second-generation Indian-American characters. Also factors in the production of second-generation Indian-American films were Hollywood's habit of marginalizing and stereotyping people of Indian ethnicity in America as well as

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Hollywood's overall lack of representation of second-generation Indian Americans. Misrepresentation and lack of representation, coupled with the growth of the Indian-American population, inevitably led to the concept and natural act of self-representation through cinema: Indian-American cinema.

Some critics of second-generation Indian-American films have accused them of being too formulaic and too focused on themes of identity; however, a closer look at these films revealed how incredibly unique each one was not only in its approach of the subject but in the varied and various treatments of more than one specific and stereotypical identity – treatments not found in either Hindi or Hollywood films. This study found that Indian-American films, particularly second-generation Indian-American films, have proven to be successful in that they have begun to communicate the diversity of the Indian-American community and have begun their service as a collective voice of this growing ethnic group. They were also successful in that they undertook the daunting task of subverting Hindi film stereotypes and correcting other distortions through self-representation. Although both types of Indian-American films have not yet been able to claim widespread fame, they have indeed made their indelible impression in the category of world cinema. They have also taken the first step towards achieving things that minority ethnic groups, namely African Americans and Latinos, have struggled to (and are still striving to) attain and maintain (Ramirez Berg, 2002). The act of self-representation by Indian Americans, therefore, has served as an activity of communication, the transmission of culture and social heritage, through the entertainment medium of film (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959).

In her interview with AsiaSource, Ganatra shared her views as to why it is

important for the South Asian community in particular to support Indian-American films:

> [I]t's so important to support films about South Asians and by support I
> mean to actually go to the theater and buy a ticket to the movie. The only
> way we as a community are going to get any representation in Hollywood
> is by a strong show of economic force […]
>
> Already I have Hollywood meetings and the first thing they ask me is,
> "Can you write a movie without South Asian characters in it?" I would
> love it if I could turn to them and say, "Yes, but look how successful
> South Asian films have been - how about if you let me write a part for
> '_____'. I'm sure they will be a big star too
> (www.asiasource.org/arts/Nisha.cfm).

A few years later, second-generation Indian-American actor Kal Penn (Kalpen Modi),

one of the leads of Hollywood film, *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004),

explained how getting Hollywood executives on board with a film with two minority lead

characters was a struggle:

> [Hurwitz and Schlossberg] were first time writers, so they couldn't take it
> to the studio and say, 'We've attached two ethnic actors and here, make
> the movie.' They had to sell the script first. There were a lot of studios
> who loved the script but were not willing to touch it because of the fact
> that it was Indian and Asian leads" (*Life And Style Magazine*, 2004).
>
> He continues, "The toilet humor wasn't it… They shied away because of
> that perception that is a combination between racism and business that we
> see all the time… When you have two ethnic actors it's a perceived risk,
> because nobody's ever done it before. And the reason nobody's ever done
> it before is because of racism. But because it's also business, nobody
> wants to do it because it's a perceived risk. So it's a big circle" (*Life And
> Style Magazine*, 2004).

In other interviews, Penn relayed experiences of how he was asked to speak in a thick

Indian accent in roles that did not require it (nymag.com/movies/profiles/28866/), and

how he was stereotyped in auditions (www.rediff.com/movies/2004/jul/19kal.htm).

As gleaned from interviews of second-generation Indian-American directors and

screenwriters and actors, the production of Indian-American films seems especially

significant as a means to show the Indian-American population as a considerable

economic source (www.asiasource.org/arts/Nisha.cfm). The production of Indian-

American films is also significant as a means to fill the gap ignored by Hollywood. As

Mehta said:

> It will be slow. We can't just pretend that tomorrow we can make a
> Hollywood film with all Indian characters. That's my goal someday; to
> make a movie with Indian characters and have it be just a regular film.
> There are other minorities who are much closer to that goal. Latin
> Americans and [East] Asian Americans may get there first, but South
> Asian Americans will get there as well (AsiaSource, 2002)

Most importantly, the production of Indian-American films is significant as a

means to "represent" (Watkins, 1998). "Representation" is also why the study of

representations of people of Indian origin in Hindi films, of people of Indian ethnicity in

Hollywood films, and of first and second-generation Indian-Americans in Indian-

American films is also necessary. With sparse representation in the four activities of

communication: surveillance, correlation, transmission of culture, and entertainment

(Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959) as well as the limited representation in academia,

particularly in communications literature, there is clearly a need for continued scholarly

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studies of the Indian-American population, culture, and media. This is why this study is relevant to the field of journalism; it is a form of representation in itself.

This study has brought to the forefront a group that has been virtually ignored in mainstream entertainment media. It has investigated representation in two major forms of entertainment media and has documented instances of stereotyping, Othering, and marginalization of a group whose identity has been obscured by vague labels (such as Asian and Asian American) and sometimes even inaccurate terms. It has not only included an otherwise generally excluded group, but has also exposed mainstream media stereotypes of this group, has revealed diversity and cultural nuances that dismantle these stereotypes, and has emphasized the significance of and need for self-representation. By highlighting the types of representation (and lack of) allotted by mainstream media to Indian Americans, particularly second-generation Indian Americans, the results of this study will provide insight for those who publish reviews of such films in newspapers and magazines, as well as for those who report on international news events and business, in addition to the film industry. It will also provide context for reporters as the evolution of Indian-American culture and therefore its transmissions of culture continue. Finally, it will provide context for the general awareness of an underrepresented, but significant and contributing, force of the American population. It is the hope of this researcher that this study has served to inform and provide context and insight for a greater understanding of Indian-American representation and the significance of self-representation and that it has opened a new vista and helped pave the way for future studies of Indian-American representation.

Methodological Contributions

By using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyze depictions in Hindi, Hollywood, and Indian-American films, a comprehensive study of representation through the entertainment medium of film was achieved. For this study in particular, content analysis lent itself to highlighting the manifest content; it also provided the opportunity to quantify instances in which content was not there – so even the absence of content was quantified as a result that answered research questions regarding representation and the lack thereof. Textual analysis allowed the researcher to examine latent content; it also provided the researcher with the means to delve into the study of representation and self-representation within their contexts. Although each of these methodologies has its merits, a single methodology would not have been sufficient to answer the research questions posed by this study. The combination of the quantitative method with the qualitative method in this study provided the breadth and depth needed to yield comprehensive results and analyses.

Another valuable dimension in the design of this study was the incorporation of findings in newspapers and magazines. While academic literature is often solely relied upon as the framework for analysis and interpretation, these journalistic sources also helped inform the textual analysis of Indian-American films and were particularly significant as this specific ethnic group is hardly included in mainstream news and other media.

Implications for Further Research

The sample cut off for all of the films analyzed was for the year 2005. In a subsequent study, films that were produced after 2005 to the present would also be analyzed; also, as this study examined a convenient sample of films for the quantitative analysis, films that were not included this sample would also be analyzed. In terms of methodology, the next step in the contribution to the study of this subject matter would be to conduct a quantitative analysis of Indian-American films so that a statistical comparison across all films could be executed. Interviews could also be conducted. One of the most interesting findings of this study was that there seemed to be two types of Indian-American films so a comparative quantitative analysis between these two types of films would provide an additional dimension to the study of these films overall and a broader contribution to this field. It would also be important to continue to track the representation of female Indians residing outside India and second-generation Indian Americans in Hindi films and Indian-American films and people of Indian ethnicity in Hollywood films.

By seizing the reins of creative control, second-generation Indian-American films are responding to the stereotypes, misrepresentation, and lack of representation perpetuated by the Hindi film industry, Hollywood, and other American media. With film culture forming such an enormous part of the popular culture of both India and America, this medium has great potential to reach the masses and engage and educate. As history has shown, this medium of communication can be used to accomplish many things, ranging from breaking stereotypes to increasing awareness of socio-political and

cultural matters, to reflecting identity and sharing life experiences through self-expression. As Watkins says, "Popular culture is generally popular because its users are able to derive pleasure from its content. Additionally, it is popular because it draws from and resonates with people's lived experiences" (Watkins, 1998, p. 13). By utilizing the medium of film as a forum for Indian-American voices to be heard, Indian-American writers and directors like *American Chai*'s Mehta are telling the stories of their experiences from a perspective that renders the stories "accessible to anybody" and "universal" (NAATA, 2004). Inspiring and exciting, it is in this way that Indian-American films realize and will continue to realize "representation of the social world as an inherently political act" (Watkins, 1998, p. 5) best achieved by the act of self-expression through self-representation.

APPENDIX

Codebook for a Content Analysis of Hindi Film Depictions of People of Indian Origin Residing Outside India and Hollywood Film Depictions of People of Indian Ethnicity In America

(complete one codesheet on each film)

Variable Number	Column	Category Names	Description and Codes
V1	1	<u>Films</u> 1. Hindi 2. Hollywood	
V2	2-3	<u>I.D. Number</u>	Beginning with 01, assign unique 2-digit number to each film coded.
V3	4-7	<u>Year</u>	Code all four numbers of year. For example, 2003.
V4	8	<u>Prominence of Role of Indian Character</u> 1. Lead 2. Supporting 3. Background and speaking 4. Background and not speaking 5. Other:_____ 6. Unable to Determine	

Additional Characters

V5   9   Type of Indian Character

1. PIO with residency abroad (Skip to V7)	Not by birth.
2. Indian-American (Go to V6)	By birth. Stated or explicityly obvious. For example, does not speak any Indian languages.
3. British-Indian (Go to V6)	By birth.
4. Unable to Determine (Skip to V7)	
5. Other: _____ (Skip to V7)	

V6   10   Cultural Status of Indian Character Born Outside of India

1. Assimilated into dominant culture	
2. Assimilated into non-dominant culture	
3. Bicultural	Comfortable with both cultures.
4. Other: _____	

V7   11   Name of Character
1. Indian
2. Western
3. Indian then shortened/changed to western
4. Other: _____
5. Unknown

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V8	12	**Sex and Gender of Character**	
		1. Male and heterosexual	
		2. Female and heterosexual	
		3. Male and unknown	
		4. Female and unknown	
		5. Male and homosexual	
		6. Female and homosexual	
		7. Other: _____	

V9	13	**Approximate Age of Character**	
		1. Aged	60 and over
		2. Middle-Aged	40 up to 60
		3. Young Adult	20 up to 40
		4. Adolescent	13 up to 19
		5. Child	up to 13
		6. Other: _____	
		7. Unable to Determine	

V10	14	**Parental Structure of Character**
		1. Mother and Father
		2. Father
		3. Mother
		4. Orphaned
		5. Adopted
		6. Other: _____
		7. Unknown

V11	15	**Primary Language of Character**	
		1. Hindi	Vernacular.
		2. English	
		3. Punjabi	
		4. Gujarati	
		5. Mixed	For example, speaking Indian language with English sentences.
		6. Other: _____	

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| V12 | 16 | Accent of Character
1. In accordance with film's dominant language
2. Not in accordance with film's dominant language
3. Other: _____
4. Unable to Determine
5. Not applicable / Unknown |

| V13 | 17 | Slang of Character
1. In accordance with film's dominant language
2. Not in accordance with film's dominant language
3. Other: _____
4. Not applicable / Unknown |

| V14 | 18 | Idiomatic Expressions/Use of Proverbs of Character
1. In accordance with film's dominant language
2. Not in accordance with film's dominant language
3. Other: _____
4. Not applicable / Unknown |

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

| V15 | 19 | Background Music of Character
1. Of India
2. Of the West
3. Fusion
4. Other: _____
5. Unable to Determine
6. None |

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V16   20   Camera Angle of Character
1. Flattering
2. Unflattering
3. Neutral
4. Unable to Determine
5: Other: _____

V17   21   Number of Close-
Ups   For Hollywood films
only.
1. 0
2. 1-3
3. 4-6
4. 7-9
5. 10-20
6. 21 or more

V18   22   Lighting in Relation to Dominant Culture
Characters
1. Brighter
2. Darker
3. Same
4. Other: _____
5. Unable to Determine

V19   Additional dialogue by character

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

V20   <u>Dialogue by other characters</u>

_____

_____

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_____

<u>PHYSICAL APPEARANCE</u>

V21   23-24   <u>Hairstyle of Character</u>
                        01. Long and worn down
                        02. Long in ponytail/braid(s)
                        03. Shoulder length and worn down
                        04. Shoulder length in ponytail/braid(s)
                        05. In a bun
                        06. Short with some long
                        07. Short
                        08. Balding/Bald
                        09. Other: _____
                        10. Unable to Determine

V22   25   <u>Skin Tone of Character</u>
                        1. Very fair
                        2. Fair
                        3. Medium
                        4. Dark
                        5. Very Dark
                        6. Other: _____
                        7. Unable to Determine

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V23	26	Color of Eyes of Character
		1. Dark brown
		2. Light brown
		3. Blue
		4. Green
		5. Contacts — Determine Color other than character's original eye color.
		6. Other: _____
		7: Unable to

V24	27	Body Type of Character
		1. Slender/Lean
		2. Average
		3. Overweight
		4. Obese
		5. Other: _____

V25	28	Height with Respect to Dominant Culture Characters
		1. Much taller
		2. Taller
		3. Approximately the same
		4. Shorter
		5. Much shorter
		6. Unable to Determine
		7. Other: _____

FASHION

V26   29   <u>Cultural Attire of Character</u>
1. Traditional Indian
2. Contemporary Indian
3. Mixed Indian and Western / Fusion
4. Western
5. Other: _____

V27   30   <u>Type of Clothing Worn by Character</u>
1. Formal wear
2. Semi-formal wear
3. Business/work attire
4. Business casual
5. Casual attire
6. Sportswear
7. Swimsuit
8. Sleepwear
9. Other: _____

V28   31   <u>Fitting of Clothing of Character</u>
1. Very tight
2. Tight / Fitted
3. Hanging semi-snugly
4. Loose
5. Very loose
6. Other: _____

V29   32   <u>Overall Level of Appropriation of Cultural Attire</u>
1. Appropriate
2. Somewhat appropriate
3. Somewhat inappropriate
4. Inappropriate
5. Other: _____

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V30	33	Counts of Bareness	(Includes showing
		1. 1	two or more of the
		2. 2	following
		3. 3	decolletage,
		4. 4	shoulders, full arms,
		5. 5	midriff, more than
		6. 6 or more	half of back, more
		7. 0	then half of legs.)

V31   34   Attire Accessories of Character
1. Glasses
2. Turban
3. Bindi / Tikka
4. Sunglasses
5. Cap / Hat
6. Other: _____
7. None

V32   35   Make-Up / Facial Hair   Depending on sex.
1. Traditional Indian
2. Modern Indian
3. Mixed Indian and Western
4. Western
5. Other: _____
6. None
7. Moustache only
8. Moustache and beard
9. Goatee

V33   36   Jewelry of Character
1. Traditional Indian
2. Modern Indian
3. Mixed Indian and Western
4. Western
5. Other: _____
6. None

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

V34   37-38   Occupation of Character
01. Doctor
02. Lawyer/Barrister
03. Engineer/Scientist
04. Technocrat
05. Accountant
06. Businessperson tycoon
07. Small business owner/manager
08. Cabdriver
09. Hotel/motel owner/manager
10. Student
11. Unemployed
12. Employed but Unknown
13. Unable to Determine if Employed/Unemployed
14. Housewife / Stay-at-home mother
15. Retired
16. Other: _____

V35   39   Education Level of Character
1. Higher (post-graduate)
2. College plus post-bac
3. College
4. High school
5. Less than high school
6. Unable to Determine
7. Other: _____

V36   40   Economic Class of Character
1. Wealthy
2. Upper class
3. Middle class
4. Lower class
5. Poor
6. From Lower/Poor to Upper/Wealthy
7. From Upper/Wealthy to Lower/Poor
8. Other: _____
9. Unable to Determine/Unknown

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V37   41   <u>Size of Home of Character</u>
1. Enormous
2. Large
3. Average
4. Modest/Small
5. Very Small
6. Other: _____
7. Unable to Determine

V38   42-43   <u>Amenities / Accoutrements (Mentionings of / Requests for / Use of)</u>
01. Change in staying / living quarters
02. Car / Limousine
03. Exercise equipment / gym
04. Swimming pool
05. Cellphone
06. Laptop
07. Cigarettes, cigar, light for cigarette
08. Alcohol
09. Bottled water
10. Particular / special drink   Other than water, alcohol.
11. Particular / special food
12. Excessive jewelry
13. Other: _____

V39   44-45   <u>Type of</u>   Owned or used due to
<u>Transportation</u>   economic status.

01. Expensive car
02. Regular car
03. Old, beaten car
04. Scooter
05. Motorcycle
06. Helicopter
07. Jet
08. Airplane
09. Train
10. Bus
11. Rickshaw
12. Bicycle
13. On foot
14. Other: _____
15. Unknown

V40   46   <u>Types of Excesses of Character</u>
1. Social/Parties
2. Sexual
3. Material/Purchasing
4. Leisure
5. Cursing
6. Other: _____
7. Unknown

V41   47   <u>Circle of Friends / Type of Company</u>
1. Cultured / Sophisticated
2. Modest / Unassuming
3. Uncouth / Ruffian
4. Other: _____
5. Unknown

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

V42   48   <u>Overall Disposition of Character</u>
1. Warm/Kind
2. Indifferent
3. Cold/Rude
4. Transformed from negative to positive
5. Other: _____
6. Unable to Determine/Unknown

V43   49   <u>Values of Character</u>
1. In accordance with film's dominant culture
2. Not in accordance with film's dominant culture
3. Mixed
4. Other: _____
5. Unable to Determine/Unknown

V44   50   <u>Attitude Towards Film's Dominant Culture</u>
1. Favorable
2. Not favorable
3. Indifferent
4. Other: _____
5. Unable to Determine/Unknown

V45   51   <u>Attitude Towards Film's Not-Dominant Culture</u>
1. Favorable
2. Not favorable
3. Indifferent
4. Other: _____
5. Unable to Determine / Unknown

V46   52   <u>General Awareness of / Comfort Level with</u> <u>Film's Dominant Culture</u>
1. High
2. Medium
3. Low
4. Other: _____
5. Unable to Determine / Unknown

V47   53   <u>Level of Academic Awareness of Character</u>
1. High
2. Medium
3. Low
4. Other: _____
5. Not applicable / Unknown

V48   54   <u>Family Interaction of Character</u>
1. Very tolerant of family
2. Somewhat tolerant of family
3. Somewhat intolerant of family
4. Very intolerant of family
5. Indifferent
6. Other: _____
7. Unable to Determine / Unknown

V49   55   <u>Work Ethic of Character</u>
1. Hard-working
2. Average / Indifferent
3. Lazy
4. Not applicable / Unknown
5. Other: _____
6. Unable to Determine / Unknown

V50   56   <u>Number of Times Shown Drinking/Holding a Drink/Requesting a Drink</u>
1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5 or more
6. 0

V51   57   <u>Number of Times Shown Holding/Smoking Requesting a Cigarette</u>
1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5 or more
6. 0

V52   58   <u>Eating Habits of Character</u>
1. In accordance with film's dominant culture
2. Not in accordance with film's dominant culture
3. Other: _____
4. Unable to Determine / Unknown

<u>OVERALL</u>

V53   59   <u>Specific Categorical Depiction of Character</u>
1. Comical / Buffoon
2. Superficial / Vain
3. Ditsy / Flighty
4. Status conscious   Materialistic, braggart, flaunting.
5. Culturally inept / Culturally lacking
6. Socially inept   Nerdy, awkward plebeian gauche.

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7. Sycophantic /
Obsequious
8. Transformed
9. Indian at heart
10. Westernized
Indian
11. Culturally
balanced /
comfortably
bicultural
12. Other: _____
13. Unable to
Determine /
Unknown

V54   60   Ultimate Residence of Character
                  1. In film's dominant country
                  2. In film's non-dominant country
                  3. Other: _____

V55	61	General Categorization of Depiction		

General
Categorization of
Depiction
1. Othered — Excluded due to difference(s) from those of dominant culture or used to make dominant culture characters look/seem "normal".

2. Marginalized — Treated as minor, insignificant in relation to dominant culture characters.

3. Stereotypical: _____ — Generalizing of an out-group member by an in-group member.

4. Non-stereotypical: _____

5. Combination: _____

6. Other: _____

7. Unable to Determine

V55   61

V56   62

Overall Rating of Depiction
1. Good / Positive
2. Somewhat Positive
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat Negative
5. Bad/ Negative

V57	63	Approximate Amount of Screen Time of Character	Determined by number of screen time minutes allotted to character.	
		1. More than half of film		
		2. From 25% to 50% of film		
		3. From 10% to 25% of film		
		4. From 5% to 10% of film		
		5. Up to 5% of film		

Additional Notes / Observations

_____

_____

Glossary

ABCD – Derogatory and near obsolete term meant to classify people of Indian descent born in America: American Born Confused Desi.

Antimsanskar – Last rites.

Arthshastra – Also called *Kautilya's Arthshastra*, a reference book written by Chanakya for later administrators.

Aarti – Another word for *pooja*, meaning a Hindu ceremony or prayer.

Atharaveda – One of the four sections of the *Vedas*.

Bindi – Worn by women, dot traditionally symbolizing marriage.

Bhangra – Traditional folk dance that originated in the Indian state of Punjab.

Bollywood – Slang term that takes the first letter of the Hindi film industry's capital, Bombay, and plays on the name Hollywood.

Brahmachayras -- The youth of ancient India, who followed certain disciplines such as strict celibacy.

Brahmanas – Ancient writings of contemplation and intuitive realizations.

Brahmanical – Of or relating to Brahmins' writings.

Brahmacharya ashram – A period of 25 years dedicated to studying philosophy, religion, science, medicine, music, art, etc.

Brahmins – During ancient India, people who devoted themselves to the acquisition of spiritual truths and knowledge of matter and spirit and later imparted this knowledge ot society through writs later known as the *Brahmanical* rites.

Caste system – During ancient India, when an individual's caste was determined by his choice of occupation.

Dandi March – Demonstration against British government. March spanned some 200 kilometers (140 miles), and when Gandhi reached the shore, he broke the British law by making salt and was arrested by the British. People all over India began to rise against the salt law.

Dandia – Traditional folk dance that involves rhythmic hitting of wooden sticks while dancing in circular or line formations.

Desi – Hindi term literally meaning "of one's country." Varies by context, but generally utilized by people of Indian ethnicity to refer to someone of Indian ethnicity.

Dhamma – Administrative policy of Akbar the Great; advocated morality, goodness, respect for all religions, peace and prosperity, and general well-being of his people regardless of caste or creed.

Diwali – New Year celebrated by Hindus.

FOB – Derogatory and near obsolete term meant to classify immigrants: Fresh Off the Boat. Not exclusively used within the Indian community

Grahasth period – A period from age 25 to approximately age 50 dedicated to family, family matters, and occupation.

Guru Kul – Type of school on which entire education system is based on ethics.

Indian-American – Adjectival form of Indian American.

Indian American – Term utilized to refer to people of Indian ethnicity who live in America.

Itihas – Ancient writings of contemplation and intuitive realizations.

Jeziah tax – Tax imposed on Hindus who refused to follow Islam during Turkish rule.

Khadi – Indian-spun cotton cloth; worn by Indian nationalists in protest of British-made merchandise.

Khadi Movement – Led by Gandhi, a call for Indian nationalists to wear Indian-spun cloth in protest of British-made merchandise; an act of Indian patriotism symbolic of the hope of an economically (and politically) independent India.

Kurta pajama – Ensemble comprised of pajamas and long shirt for males and for females, (particularly young females), comprised of the same and long scarf-like piece.

Kshyatriyas – Caste known as the warriors; learned art of warfare to expand territories to which they belonged.

Mahabharata – Ancient Indian epic.

Manu Smriti – Governing laws of the Hindu people of ancient India.

MPEAA – Movie Picture Export Association of America.

Namkaransanskar – Naming of the child and drawing up of a horoscope.

NRI – Abbreviated term (for Non-Resident Indian) perpetuated by the Indian government to label people of Indian ethnicity who are living abroad, that is, in a country other than India.

Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)– Utilized by the Indian government and Indian films industry, particularly the Hindi film industry, to refer to any person of Indian origin that is residing anywhere outside India.

PIO – Person/People of Indian Origin.

People of Indian Origin (PIO) – Person of Indian descent.

Pooja – Another word for *arthi*, meaning a Hindu ceremony or prayer

Puranas – Ancient writings of contemplation and intuitive realizations.

Purdahs – Veils that conceal Muslim women's bodies; during Islamic rule, the purdah system was imposed on Hindu women as well.

Ramayana – Ancient Indian epic.

Rigveda – One of the four sections of the *Vedas*.

Rishis – Sage and seers who did not renounce the world, led family lives, and retired as recluses in the forest to impart education.

Samveda – One of the four sections of the *Vedas*.

Sanyasi – Males over the age of about 75 who renounced the world and left their homes to become forest and mountain recluses to attain Divinity.

Sanyasin – Females over the age of about 75 who renounced the world and left their homes to become forest and mountain recluses to attain Divinity.

Sari – Worn by women, traditional three piece ensemble, consisting of long piece of fabric, blouse, and petticoat.

Satyagrahe – Freedom struggle based on non-violence and led by Gandhi.

Second-generation Indian Americans – Term used to refer to people of Indian ethnicity who are born and raised in America.

Shudras – Those who performed a number of occupations.

Sulh-Kul – Policy of Akbar the Great; meaning "peace for all," abolished Jexiah tax and gave Hindus freedom of association and freedom of worship.

Sutras – Ancient writings of contemplation and intuitive realizations.

Swadeshi – Nationalist.

Swayamvar – Process through which women of ancient India chose their husbands.

Tikka – Red, washable, paint-like substance that is applied (in vertical line for males and dot for females) to the middle of person's forehead by another as a blessing in Hindu ceremonies.

Untouchables – Unskilled laborers.

Upanishads – Ancient writings of contemplation and intuitive realizations.

Vaishyas – Those who preferred to trade.

Vanprastha period – A period (with limited involvement with day-today domestic matters) mostly spent on educational and spiritual pursuits.

Vedas – Stratified mass of literature; transcribed intuitive realizations organized by subject knowledge rather than by chronology.

Vedic – Of or relating to the Vedic period or ancient texts known as the Vedas.

Vivahsankar – Entering marriage.

Yagyoadavita – Marking of the beginning of education; the child attend school after this rite.

Yajurveda – One of the four sections of the *Vedas*.

Translation of Indian Film Titles
(in order of appearance)

Bhasmasur Mohini (1913) – *The Legend of Bhasmasur*.

Bhilet Pherat (1921 and 1972) – *The England-Returned*.

Savkari Pash (1925) – *Indian Shylock*.

Diler Jigar (1931) – *Gallant Hearts*.

Madhuri (1932) – Name, meaning sweet, for female.

Udaykal (1930) – *Thunder of the Hills*.

Swarajyacha Toran (1930) – *The Garland of Freedom*.

Acchut (1939) – Untouchable.

Udayer Pathey (1944) – Bengali title of film.

Humrahi (1944) – Hindi film remake of *Udayer Pathey*.

Do Bigha Zamin (1953) – *Two Acres of Land*.

Dharti Ke Lal (1946) – *Children of the Earth*.

Neecha Nagar (1946) – *Lowly City*.

Dr. Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani (1946) – *The Journey of Dr. Kotnis*.

Anjangarh (1948) – Strange house.

Kalpana (1948) – Imagination.

Awara (1951) – Vagabond.

Chandralekha (1948) – Name of a female.

Baazi (1951) – Bet.

Aar Paar (1954) – This or That.

Pyaasa (1957) – Eternal Thirst/Thirsty One.

Andaaz (1949) – One's own style or approach.

Sangam (1964) – Union.

Aman (1967) – Peace.

Aankhen (1968) – Eyes.

Sahib, Biwi, Aur Ghulam (1962) – Master, Wife, and Servant.

Jalsagar (1958) – The Music Room.

Shaher Aur Sapna (1963) – City and dream.

Chaudvin ka Chand (1960)

Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai (1960) – The country in which the Ganga flows.

Kissa Kursi Ka (1977) – Story of Power.

Junoon (1978) – Obession or madness.

Ek Baar Phir (1980) – Once again.

Akrosh (1980) – Anger.

Arth (1982) – Substance.

Saransh (1984) – Epitome.

Purab Aur Paschim (1970) – East and West.

Saath Hindustani (1969) – Seven Indians.

Zanjeer (1973) – Chain.

Sholay (1974) – Blaze.

Shatranj ke Khiladi (1977) – The Chessplayers.

Lagaan (2001) – Tax.

Parineeta (2005) – Name of a female.

Hum (1991) – Us.

Mohabbatein (2001) – Loves.

Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (2001) – Sometimes happy, sometimes sad.

Baghban (2003) – The one who tends to his garden.

Lawaris (1981) – Abandoned.

Silsila (1981) – Love Affair.

Tezaab (1988) – Acid.

Ek do teen – One, two, three.

Maine Pyaar Kiya (1989) – I have loved.

Dil (1990) – Heart.

Hum Aapke Hain Kaun…! (1994) – Who am I to you?

Nadiya Ke Paar (1982) – Across the river.

Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995) – He who has heart takes the bride.

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