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FROM KABUL TO THE ACADEMY: NARRATIVES OF AFGHAN WOMEN'S
JOURNEYS TO AND THROUGH U.S. DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Bushra Aryan

August 2010

Advisor: Dr. Franklin A. Tuitt

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of seven Afghan women pursuing doctoral degrees in a variety of disciplines and programs across the United States. The guiding question for this study was: What factors influence Afghan women's journeys to and experiences in doctoral programs?

In an attempt to understand Afghan women doctoral students, I provided a historical background of Afghanistan and education in Afghanistan followed by a literature review on South Asian women, the broader category for Afghan women. Within this literature review I explored the following components: culture, gender, immigration, experiences in postsecondary education; all factors that may be influential in the journey of South Asian women in U.S. postsecondary education. Finally, a critical race feminism theoretical framework was utilized to fuse the factors affecting South Asian women in higher education and provide a theoretical guide for further research specifically investigating Afghan women in doctoral programs.

Through the use of narrative inquiry, I provided an individual and collective story of the lives of seven Afghan women in U.S. doctoral programs. From these stories, four themes emerged as influential in the lives of the participants. The four themes that emerged were faith, identity, capital, and family.

Upon a thorough investigation of the themes and multiple sub-themes, several implications and recommendations were made. The findings of the study showed that there are no formulas to understand the complexities in the lives of Afghan women doctoral students, but several intersecting identities and factors that create the journey and help the reader understand their experiences.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction and History

The Digest of Educational Statistics states that women are the largest growing group within the college student population. In addition, the percentage of domestic students of color has also increased (Snyder & Dillow, 2010). As these populations increase in higher education, so does valuable research and literature on their experiences in higher education. This has certainly been the case for women of color in higher education and in particular for those pursuing doctoral degrees (Aronson & Swanson, 1991; Burke, Cropper, & Harrison, 2000, Turner & Thompson, 1993). Experiences such as having access to advising, mentoring, and resources to successfully execute the dissertation have been examined in the literature (Daniel, 2007; Molina, 2008, Rosales & Person, 2003). Additionally, the experiences of women of color post-graduation have also been documented. For example, references to experiences of women of color as faculty members and administrators are represented through narratives, detailed accounts, and statistics (Myers & Dugan, 1996; Turner, 2007).

Although there is an abundance of writing on the experiences of women of color in higher education; this body of work primarily documents the experiences of African American and Latina women and the challenges they face related to socialization, satisfaction, and the intersections of race and gender (Aronson & Swanson, 1991; Ellis, 2001; Johnson & Arbona, 2006; Turner & Thompson, 1993). Moreover, within this body

of research there is very little documentation on the journey towards or reasons for pursuing a doctorate. There are some statistics available that present information about access to the doctorate for women of color. For example, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reports that 8% of doctoral degrees in 2008 were awarded to African American women and 4% of doctoral degrees were awarded to Latina women (Snyder & Dillow, 2010). Nevertheless, as indicated above there is very little research about the journey that women of color undertake in pursuing doctoral degrees.

Next to African American and Latino women, the largest group to receive attention in the literature are Asian American women; however, this body of work often focuses on East Asian women (Torok, 2002). Placing Asian women into such a large category can be problematic. East Asia is geographically considered to be Japan, China, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam (Miyahara & Meyers, 2008). There is an assumption that Asians are a homogenous people and there is very little discussion of the vast differences in culture and religion among Asian people (Hussain & Cochrane, 2002). Once again examining issues of access, Asian women represent 6.1% of the doctoral degrees conferred in 2008. However, it is important to note that within that statistic Central, South, or East Asian student populations are not examined separately (Snyder & Dillow, 2010).

Embedded in the large group of students identified as Asian is also the category of South Asian students. This includes students from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan (Deepak, 2005). Although the Digest of Educational Statistics does not provide statistics on South Asian students in U.S. higher education, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that there are approximately 1.89 million South Asians in the U.S.

(Deepak, 2005). The Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, D.C. estimates that Afghans account for more than 300, 000 people (<http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/diaspora.html>) in the South Asian population; residing mainly in California, New York, and the Washington metropolitan area (Yusuf, 2007). Deepak (2005) reports that within ten years (1990-2000) the U.S. South Asian population increased 106%. This population increase will result in a greater demand for access to higher education and research on this student population. This is particularly true for South Asian women in higher education. The current available literature on South Asian women is modest, but significant, discussing culture, gender, and experiences in postsecondary education (Ali, 2004; Asher, 2006; Badruddoja, 2006; Burr, 2002; Dasgupta, 1998; Gupta, 1998; Hussain & Bagguley, 2007). Nevertheless, within that literature there is virtually nothing that speaks to the experiences of Afghan-American women in U.S. higher education, let alone doctoral programs. Therefore, I have conducted research on Afghan women's journeys¹ toward doctoral degrees.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation research was to focus on the experiences of Afghan women on their journeys to and through their doctoral programs via the question:

- What factors influence Afghan women's journeys to and experiences in doctoral programs?

And sub-question:

- How have their intersecting identities, both as Afghan and women, impacted their decision to pursue a doctoral degree?

¹ The participants have journeyed from many cities in Afghanistan and one participant was U.S. born. Therefore, the title of the dissertation, From Kabul to the Academy, is meant as a metaphor.

There is a dearth of literature regarding Afghan women and education. In addition, there is a larger gap in the literature and misunderstanding of Afghan people, Afghan culture, and Afghans' views on education (Kaifi, 2009). The goal of the present research was to explain the experiences of Afghan-American women in U.S. doctoral programs through an examination of the literature on factors that affect South Asian women on their journey and decisions to pursue the highest level of education. I begin by providing a historical context of Afghanistan as well as current Afghan relations with the U.S. The historical context is important because it is necessary to understand Afghan culture and the history of education in Afghanistan in order to better understand Afghan-American women and their motivations in pursuing doctorates. Furthermore, the current U.S. relations with Afghanistan play a role in the perception and treatment of Afghan-American women in the academy, therefore, an equally important issue to discuss.

Afghan History

Afghanistan is a country that has had a rich history of changes, invasions, and cultural fluxes. There have been many countries that have invaded Afghanistan in attempts to take over and attempts to change the country's religion (Emadi, 2005; Ewans, 2002). Culture in Afghanistan comes from the influences of each group that has occupied the country (Ewans, 2002). The different dialects spoken in Afghanistan have also been molded by these influences as well as religious influences (Ali, 1964). Afghanistan's history shows us that the country's culture is formed from years and years of external and religious influences. There is no one word which can describe how Afghan culture, and ultimately, communication, was formed. Afghan culture has been rooted in Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, and Islamic practices and has also been influenced by Indians,

Persians, Mongols, the British, Russians, and Americans (Ali, 1964; Emadi, 2005; Ewans, 2002).

During the years 2000 BCE to 1500 BCE Afghanistan was known as Aryana. During that time Aryana included modern day Afghanistan, Iran, and Northern India, and is where the name Aryan originates (Ali, 1964). Major cities, such as Kabul, were established during this time period. At this time Aryana was a Buddhist nation. In about 600 BCE, Zoroaster introduced a new religion known as Zoroastrianism which is a monotheistic religion. The religion was primarily introduced to the Bactria region, currently known as Mazar-i-Shariff (Ali, 1964; Emadi, 2005).

Darius the Great expanded the Persian Empire and it is said that most of Afghanistan was taken over from 522 BCE to 486 BCE. However, the Afghans, especially from Arachosia, were constantly involved in tribal revolts which caused the Persian Empire to retreat. Many years later Alexander the Great conquered Persia and invaded Afghanistan during 329 BCE and stayed until 326 BCE (Ewans, 2002). Similar to Darius the Great, Alexander was forced to leave due to the constant revolts by the people of the country (Ali, 1964; Emadi, 2005). Shortly after in 323 BCE, the Greeks ruled northern Afghanistan, specifically Bactria. Moving forward to 50 AD, the Kushan Empire ruled Afghanistan under King Kanishka. Buddhism had reached its peak and continued to thrive in the country. Buddha was given his first human face in a carving at a mountain side. The carvings represented an image of the world's largest Buddha, standing at 175 feet and 120 feet carved into the cliff at Bamiyan (Ali, 1964). These were the same statues that were destroyed in modern day Afghanistan by the Taliban. Aside

from Buddha and Buddhism, many gods and goddesses from Persian, Greek, Central Asian, and Hindu cultures were also worshipped (Ali, 1964).

In 220 AD the Kushan Empire fragmented into dynasties. The White Huns invaded Afghanistan in 400 AD and destroyed the thriving Buddhist religion. They left most of the country in ruins. Years later, the Yaftalee ruled and rebuilt Afghanistan. The Yaftalee Dynasty was established in Takhar in the northern Hindu Kush region. Following the Yaftalee Dynasty, the Persians reentered Afghanistan in 550 AD and took over all of current day Afghanistan. In 652 AD the country began to experience religious change as the Arabs introduced Islam. By 962 Afghanistan had become an Islamic country and was being ruled by the Ghaznavid Dynasty. The Ghaznavid Empire crumpled in 1030 after the death of Mahmud Ghazni (Ali, 1964).

An extremely crucial moment in Afghan history was the invasion of Genghis Khan in 1219. Khan invaded with his Mongol army and is said to have slain thousands of Afghans. Khan eventually retreated but left behind 1000 Mongols (Ali, 1964; Emadi, 2005). The Mongols remained in Afghanistan and began mingling with Afghans. The tribes of Mongol/Afghan people are known as Hazaras (hazar is 1000 in Farsi). Hazaras were among the most oppressed groups in Afghanistan and remain in the midst of much current day tribal warfare. From the 1500s to the 1800s, Afghanistan was ruled by various dynasties attempting to take over the land.

In 1836 the British invaded Afghanistan. 1839 to 1842 marked the first Afghan war with England. The British retreated in 1843 but took over Baluchistan in 1859, landlocking Afghanistan. In 1878 the British invaded Afghanistan again and engaged in war. The British invaded a third time in 1921 (Ewans, 2002). During these invasions and

moving forward in time, Afghanistan was ruled by series of kings. In the 1920s Amanollah Shah fought to modernize Afghanistan and one step toward modernization was fighting for women's rights (Ewans, 2002); this will be discussed in more detail shortly. The last king to reign over Afghanistan was Zahir Shah. In 1973, Zahir Shah was overthrown in a military coup by Daoud Khan, Zahir Shah's cousin and a member of the Afghan communist party (Emadi, 2005).

History of Afghan Education

Education has existed in Afghanistan before it was even known as Afghanistan. However, formal education along with the formation of the department of education did not occur until 1913 (Sadat, 2004). In the 1920s, during the reign of Shah Amanollah, schools began to be established in major towns (Sadat, 2004). Many of these schools were based on French and German curricula and were created with the help of French teachers. The ultimate goal was to create schools that were comparable to Europe, Egypt, and Turkey (Sadat, 2004). The first all girls schools were built in 1921 (Beg, 2005) and a few vocational schools came shortly after in 1924 (Sadat, 2004).

One of the most influential leaders in the push for education and women's rights was Queen Soraya, Shah Amanollah's wife. Queen Soraya herself was considered one of the most liberal queens of Afghanistan to date because she believed in the liberation and education of women and chose to show this through her progressive, or Western, wardrobe and active role in government. Queen Soraya and her mother created the first women's protection agency/association, the first women's magazine, allowed co-education, and banned the requirement of women wearing burqas (Barakat & Wardell, 2002; Ghosh, 2001). Since there was no higher education system in place, students who

wished to attend college were sent abroad to France, Germany, and Egypt to pursue this dream (Ghosh, 2001; Sadat, 2004). As time went on some of the tribal leaders forced their areas to go back to the old systems of schooling and treating women; wearing burqas and receiving no formal education (Ghosh, 2001). However, change would occur again during the reign of Zahir Shah.

By the 1960s, some say that Kabul was known as the Paris of Central Asia (Bumiller, 2009). Women wore the latest fashions, including mini-skirts and sleeveless dresses while attending Kabul University (Bumiller, 2009). Women from the city, specifically Kabul, were at one point in history advancing past women in many other countries. For example, in the 1960s, King Zahir Shah was sending women to study abroad and allowed them to enroll in co-educational universities in Afghanistan (Beg, 2005; Fitzgerald & Gould, 2009). He was determined to emancipate women (Beg, 2005). By the 1970s, women formed 50% of the workforce including teachers, doctors, nurses, and government positions. Afghanistan was not the country people see today.

Current U.S. Relations

By 1973, Daoud Khan had overthrown Zahir Shah and had become the first president of Afghanistan. In 1978, Daoud Khan was killed, the Mujahideen (Afghan guerrilla) had been formed, and in December of the next year the Russians had invaded. The war lasted for years, killed many Afghans, wounded many more, and a stream of 'puppet governments' were instilled (Emadi, 2005; Ewans, 2002). The Russian invasion turned the Afghan population into one of the largest groups of refugees in the world; estimated to have been over 5 million people (Yusuf, 2007). Of these 5 million immigrants, 3.5 million immigrated to Pakistan, 2.3 million immigrated to Iran (Yusuf,

2007), and approximately 32, 000 immigrants came to America (Younos, 1998). The Russians fully withdrew in February of 1989 (Emadi, 2005; Ewans, 2002). Fitzgerald and Gould (2009) report that the United States trained and funded the Mujahideen to be able to win this war, however did nothing to help rebuild the country post-war. In 1992, the Mujahideen took over Kabul and liberated Afghans, but this was short-lived as the Taliban began advancing and took over Afghanistan in 1994. By 1996, the Taliban had seized full control of Afghanistan and were enforcing their version of Islam on all its citizens (Fitzgerald & Gould, 2009). They also massacred thousands of people, mainly from the Hazara tribe, a group which has been historically oppressed. During this time the United States launched missiles into the Khost region stating that their intent was to destroy terrorist training bases, bin Laden, and other followers. Civilians were also killed in these attacks (Fitzgerald & Gould, 2009).

In 2001, the Taliban continued their reign of terror. They relentlessly killed people (mostly the Hazaras), destroyed the Buddhas of Bamiyan, and denied any peace treaties or ideas to build grand assemblies (known as Loya Jirga, similar to the congress in America) (Ewans, 2002). During that same year, the events of September 11th occurred. The attacks are reported to have been conducted by Osama bin Laden and his followers. U.S. intelligence agencies reported that bin Laden was being protected by the Taliban in the mountains of Afghanistan (Fitzgerald & Gould, 2009). As a result, the United States, United Kingdom, and UNIFSA launched air strikes into Afghanistan. By November, the Taliban had lost control of Mazar-i-Shariff, a Loya Jirga was formed, and Hamid Karzai was elected as president of the country (Fitzgerald & Gould, 2009). The war against Al Qaeda and bin Laden, or the war on “terror” as the media calls it, is still

underway (Kaifi, 2009). Unfortunately, some statistics show that the war has killed more civilians than terrorists (Mehta, 2002). Education has been the largest sector of Afghan society affected by the war (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007).

...the Afghan population who languished for decades in refugee camps lost almost all access to modern education, depriving an entire generation of basic literacy...under the rule of the Taliban, almost all girls were driven from school...the Asian Development Bank estimated that 80 percent of school buildings were destroyed in the wars. (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007, p. 251)

Schooling was permitted again in 2002 and by 2005 five million children were back in school. However, it is still estimated that a large portion of the female population under the age of 11 is not in school (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007).

For Afghan-Americans, this war and the attacks of September 11th have led to a great deal of despair, need to (re)-educate Westerners about Afghan culture, and enormous amount of suffering from hate crimes against Afghan culture and religion (Cloud, 2004; Kaifi, 2009; Rahel, 2001). As of December 2009, President Obama has announced he will be sending more troops into Afghanistan (<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/17/obama.troops/index.html>).

Significance of the Study

Very little is known about the Afghan population in the U.S. and an even lesser amount is known about Afghan-American women in U.S. doctoral programs. As a result, this study first seeks to fill a significant gap in the higher education literature on women of color. Second, it allows readers to understand Afghan culture, Afghan's views on education, and Afghans as American citizens rather than foreigners. Finally, this study seeks to provide information on Afghan women which will aid college administrators, staff, and policy makers to create a more inclusive environment for all students.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2: Literature review.

Research on the experiences of South Asian students is minimal within the discourse on women of color (Badruddoja, 2006), making literature on Afghan women even more of a rarity. In an attempt to understand Afghan women in U.S. doctoral programs I utilized the literature on South Asian women as a whole. I explored three components that may influence the experiences of Afghan women in U.S. higher education. First, I outlined the effects of immigration on educational attainment. Second, I discussed the effects of culture and gender norms on the lives of South Asian women. Third, I explored the experiences of South Asian women in U.S. higher education. Finally, a critical race feminism theoretical framework was utilized to analyze the three facets affecting South Asian women in higher education and provide a racial and gender construction of their decision to enter academe.

Chapter 3: Methodology.

In order to document the lives of Afghan women I chose narrative inquiry, which allowed me to create a counter-narrative within the dominant discourse through the use of storytelling, or oral histories, a tradition in Afghan culture. Narrative inquiry is a method which allows the human story to be told through the collection of her oral history (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In addition, narrative inquiry allows the author's story to be told, creating a space for the researcher and the researched and maintaining a balance so that the researcher's story does not become dominant within the research. Narrative inquiry also maintains the cultural traditions of storytelling found in Afghan culture. It allows for a Western methodology to be used in a manner that respects an age-old

tradition of passing knowledge, customs, language, and culture among Afghans. Finally, narrative inquiry is in line with critical race feminist philosophies and the use of voice to empower women and share their story.

Chapter 4: Narratives.

Through the use of narrative inquiry, I provided seven individual narratives of Afghan women currently enrolled in doctoral programs. Each woman shared her story of how she or her family arrived in the U.S. from Afghanistan, how they began their lives in America, and how she journeyed through the education system from primary education to doctoral programs. Throughout the narratives I captured the individual experience of each woman in terms of how she journeyed through education and the major factors that affected her journey.

Chapter 5: Themes.

From an analysis of the narratives in chapter four, there were four emerging themes: sarmaye (capital), faamilee (family), iman (faith), and hoiyat (identity). Each theme and sub-themes are discussed in greater detail; providing a grand narrative for all the participants. The themes are then summarized through a conceptual model.

Chapter 6: Summary, implications, and conclusion.

In the final chapter, I provided a summary of the study discussing the four major factors that affect Afghan women's lives as they pursue doctorates. From there, I present implications and recommendations for each of the themes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In an attempt to understand the factors that affect Afghan women in their pursuit of a doctoral degree I must draw parallels from other bodies of literature. I first explain the journeys of African American women, Latina women, Asian women, and then South Asian women. However, there is very little literature which explains the actual journey to higher education; therefore, I rely on the literature on college choice as a part of the journey. Even further, this dissertation research focuses on the journey to the doctorate and the current body of literature focuses on college in general (Kim, 2004; Kurlaender, 2006; Muhammad, Smith, & Duncan, 2008; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008), thus parallels must be drawn between undergraduate and graduate journeys. I begin by explaining the factors that are listed as influential in the college choice process for African American, Latina, and Asian women and their experiences in higher education, then, I focus on the South Asian women's literature as a means to explain Afghan women's experiences.

It is important to note that among the literature on South Asian women there is one dissertation which explores the transformation among Afghan women through graduate education (Yusuf, 2007). More specifically, Yusuf explores the lives of Afghan women in graduate school through a transformative learning theory context. The cultural struggles and experiences for Afghan women in graduate school that Yusuf has documented have been incorporated in the following literature review.

Factors that Affect Women of Color's Choice to Pursue Postsecondary Education

Scholars have found that a multitude of factors affect whether or not women of color pursue postsecondary education and which institutions they choose to attend. These factors include but are not limited to: culture, financial aid packages, predisposition to pursue education, parent's education level, race, gender, college generational status, and socioeconomic status (Kurlaender, 2006; Muhammad 2008; Perez & McDonough, 2008).

African American women's college choice is affected by cultural support, parent's educational attainment, gender, race, and financial aid (Muhammad, 2008; Muhammad, Smith, & Duncan, 2008; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008). Scholars purport that having cultural support will aid African American women in pursuing postsecondary education (Muhammad, 2008). Cultural support in this context is used to mean having cultural and social capital, or the means and resources to have the know-how in the college choice process. In addition, parent's level of education falls into this arena of cultural support. An interesting factor to take into consideration is that many of these models are defining cultural support from a Western and Eurocentric perspective (Muhammad, 2007). The lack of financial aid packages and feeling like college is unaffordable have also been noted to be a deterrent to college enrollment for African American students. Unlike their Asian counterparts, African Americans are less likely to view student loans as a good choice in order to make college affordable (Kim, 2004). Finally, gender and race play a role in African American's choice to pursue postsecondary education. Muhammad, Smith, and Duncan (2008) report that African American women are more likely to attend and complete college than their male

counterparts. Race is one of the largest reasons that keep both African American men and women from pursuing education. “The barriers Black students face, include but are not limited to the ‘intimidation factor,’ which is the extent to which being a minority on an all White campus is perceived as a negative experience” (Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008, p. 17).

Latinas face some similar challenges as African American students in their college choice process. Among these factors are gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Perez & McDonough, 2008). Scholars have found that the lack of financial resources limit Latina students from attending four-year institutions or postsecondary education altogether (Kim, 2004; Kurlaender, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008). Finally, Perez and McDonough (2008) state that “gender, in addition to race, is indeed a critical factor mediating the college choice process for Latinos and Latinas and merits further attention” (p. 252), making it clear that the college choice process for Latinas is still sparse and that gender and race matter but need more exploration.

In regards to Asian women, we have even less information on their college choice processes and influential factors. Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, and McDonough (2004) have found that Asian students are oftentimes left out of the college choice literature because they are deemed as the model minority, or a group of students that surpass Whites and therefore do not have barriers to academic access and achievement. The few studies that have been done on the Asian population have found that immigration, stereotypes, and family affect the college choice process for the Asian or Asian Pacific Islander population (Teranishi et al., 2004).

Scholars state that Asians are an immigrant population that arrived to the U.S. on their own accord, as opposed to conquest, slavery, or colonization. This they cite as reason for Asian's high educational achievement (Ogbu, 1974; Teranishi et al., 2004; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Even further, immigrant families are believed to provide the "isolation necessary for success" (Teranishi et al., 2004, p. 530), which will be discussed in more detail shortly. In regards to stereotypes, Zhou & Bankston (1998) state that some Asian populations benefit from the model minority stereotype and excel in academics. Finally, family influences, encouragement, and parent's level of education help Asian students excel and pursue higher education (Teranishi et al., 2004). It is pertinent to note that the study conducted by Teranishi et al. looks at five East Asian ethnic groups while there are approximately 34 ethnic groups in the Asian/Asian Pacific Islander population.

It is evident that the literature on Asian women's college choice is minimal, making the exploration of the different ethnic groups even more rare. Even further, the literature on South Asian women's college choice is a small part of the literature and does not proceed to break down the ethnic groups within that population, such as Afghan women. Therefore, I have drawn parallels from the larger South Asian population literature in order to explore and explain the college choice process, as in the decision to pursue a higher degree, for Afghan women. I begin this exploration through the lens of a critical race feminism (CRF) theoretical framework. After my explanation of CRF, I will explore the literature on immigration, culture and gender, and experiences in postsecondary education for South Asian women.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race feminism.

In order to understand critical race feminism (CRF), the theoretical framework that was utilized for this study, I will first provide the background for critical race theory (CRT) which serves as the foundation for CRF. CRT is a theory that was created by legal scholars of color to understand the implications that race has within the judicial system and legislation (Howard-Hamilton 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT is comprised of several basic tenets. These basic tenets state that:

1. Racism is embedded in the American system;
2. The legal system is not neutral or objective;
3. Race is a social construct;
4. The law should be challenged and historically analyzed;
5. Racism has contributed to power, privilege, and oppression in America;
6. We need to recognize the experiences and knowledge of people of color;
7. CRT is interdisciplinary (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

CRT seeks to end racial oppression as a means of ending all oppression (Daniel, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) state that CRT was introduced into education by Ladson-Billings and Tate in 1998. CRT in education reflected the qualities of CRT in legislation, but with a perspective catered to the academy. Solórzano and Yosso (2001) purport that race is a large factor in the inequalities seen throughout education. It has been shown by scholarly research that students of color are achieving at lower rates than their White counter parts and this is

resulting in lower college attendance (Daniel, 2007; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Furthermore, scholars state that education has become a property right and not a human right (Daniel, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). This ownership of college campuses and curricula leave students of color feeling even further marginalized as they continue to be excluded from the classroom and campus. This concept also means that higher quality education is closely tied to race and property rights with Whites attending schools with better resources. Finally, CRT in education has shown that desegregation has benefitted White students more than it has students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

CRF is a branch of CRT that seeks to emphasize the struggles of women of color, specifically in the legal system (Wing, 2003). Few (2007) purports that CRF recognizes the multiple identities inhabited by women, thereby, creating an anti-essentialist basis. Many women of color are faced with a magnitude of marginalization through the intersections of sexism and racism. The literature on women's experiences show that the voices of marginalized groups have been ignored in research (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2003). The idea of race being a Black and White issue transfers into other identities such as gender. The multiple identities of women must be understood in relation to race and only then can we reach a rich analysis of the meaning of gender and race (Delgado Bernal, 2002). It is important to note that while women share the commonality of sexist experiences, there are separate oppressions that tie into the lives of women of color (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). This oppression can be brought to light through feminist movements; however, women of color have been and

often continue to be excluded from these movements (Delgado Bernal 2002). Through the use of CRF, a variety of theoretical frameworks can be produced and utilized (Carbado, 2002). CRF can help to explain the struggles of women as racialized, genderized and sexualized beings and notes that women have different experiences even as racial members of the same group (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Critiques of the theory.

CRT has been critiqued because of its method of challenging scholarship that marginalizes people of color (Delgado Bernal, 2002). I will discuss two potential arguments against CRT and CRF. Delgado Bernal (2002) states that progressive or postmodernist scholars may claim that CRT focuses on race, therefore, creating the illusion that all people of color are the same. The second and popular critique is that against personal narratives. Some scholars claim that personal narratives cannot be used to replace traditional scholarship and that these stories are not an example of a common experience (Delgado Bernal, 2002), nor do these narratives provide solid data the way that quantitative data can report through numbers.

I have found that CRT, and even more specifically CRF, shows that “one’s identity is not based on the social construction of race but rather is multidimensional and intersects with various experiences” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p.118). Therefore, CRF brings to light the multidimensionality of women of color and shows that “gender can never be studied in isolation from race and class and related social conditions” (Andersen, 2005, p.444). Many feminist scholars of color have shown that other feminist movements have left women of color out of the gender and sexism discussion (hooks,

2000; Collins 1996). An important piece of claiming a space in the White feminist discourse is through the use of voice. Due to the prevalence of Eurocentrism, some scholars may “find it difficult to accept the notion that a critical raced-gendered epistemology is important” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p.120). Hence, the importance of providing a counter-story to build a scholarship base that is inclusive and less subjective.

Integrating CRF.

Scholars have found that CRF can be viewed as an extension of other forms of feminist thought such as Black feminism and multicultural feminism (Few, 2007; Housee, 2008). Due to the multidisciplinary approach of critical race feminists, the scholarship that is produced as a result discusses a variety of issues such as social policies, child care, health, immigration, and education (Wing, 2000). Furthermore, the methods used in this type of research tend to be non-traditional approaches such as poetry and narratives (Few, 2007; Fernandez, 2002).

The research I am conducting on South Asian women requires the guidance of a theoretical framework, such as CRF, that will encompass the qualities needed to give a rich description of this complex group of women. CRF will allow me to center the experiences of South Asian women within an interdisciplinary literature review. CRF also provides a foundation which allows me to address the multiplicative intersections of race and gender. Lastly, CRF values counter-narratives, celebrating the experiences and voices of the Other.

Literature Review on Factors that Affect South Asian Women

Through the literature on South Asian women I provided a description of the factors that affect Afghan women's choice to pursue doctoral degrees. The factors that will be discussed are the effects of immigration, culture and gender, and experiences in postsecondary education.

Immigration: Multi-generational Viewpoint on the Effects of Immigration Status on South Asian Women in Higher Education

The literature on immigrant populations in the U.S. provides examples of struggles with adaptation to host cultures, the loss of identity and language, and difficulty feeling like an American (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Park-Taylor, Ng, Ventura, Kang, Morris, Gilbert, et al., 2008; Younos, 1998). Immigrants are people who move from their homeland to another country and seek permanent residence in that host country (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, Sullivan, 2009). Although the U.S. is a nation of immigrants, those groups of people who have immigrated here have not always been accepted and welcomed by U.S. born individuals (Bahl, 2005; Bozorgmehr, 1997; Kitano, 1996; Park-Taylor et al., 2008). For example the internment of Japanese Americans in 1941 after the Pearl Harbor attack (Kitano, 1996) and the treatment of Arab Americans, or those perceived to be of Arab decent, after the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center on September 11th (Abu El-Haj, 2006) represent this lack of acceptance. These challenges are faced by the South Asian community as well through the multitude of hate crimes, religious prejudices, and stereotypes (Inman, 2006).

History of South Asian immigration.

South Asians began immigrating to the U.S. in the late 1890s into the 1920s. This group of immigrants was comprised primarily of Punjabi laborers who went to California to work for lumber companies, railroads, and steamships (Deepak, 2005; Leonard, 1992). The 1917 Immigration Act brought this influx of immigrants to a halt by prohibiting immigrants to enter specific areas of the country. Even further, those who had already immigrated were prohibited from bringing family members to the U.S. by the Immigration Law of 1924. Years later, in 1946 the immigration ban on the South Asian population was lifted, however, visas were limited to 105 per year. That year also marked the first time that South Asians from India were given U.S. citizenship (Deepak, 2005; Takaki, 1989). The next major wave of South Asian immigrants came to the U.S. during the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which granted South Asians who held professional degrees, or were looking to pursue postsecondary education, permission to enter the U.S. (Deepak, 2005; Inman, 2006). During this time the annual number of visas given out were increased from 105 to 20, 000 (Salam, 2004; Takaki, 1989). The immigration laws were once again reconsidered in the 1980s during which the information technology sector began to increase. This increase allowed technologically savvy professionals, students, and their families to enter the U.S. with an H1B visa, work, and eventually apply for permanent residency (Deepak, 2005; Prashad, 2000).

The U.S. census report of 2000 estimates there are 1.89 million South Asians in the U.S., making them the third largest group of Asian immigrants. Of this 1.89 million, the census reports that 1, 678, 765 are Indian and 153, 533 are Pakistani (Deepak, 2005).

Even though South Asians are racially classified as Asian, the dominant U.S. discourse associated with the classification of Asian are for those from East Asia, thereby, leaving prevailing U.S. society struggling with assigning a racial identity for South Asian populations. Despite this struggle to coin the “Other” by the general population, the U.S. federal government classifies South Asians as Asian, non-White (Inman, 2006). This classification came about in the 1970s in an effort by the U.S. Census Bureau to create one main category for people that they deemed similar, thus, creating the Asian or Pacific Islander (API) classification category. However, this caused an outrage among the vast Asian community as members argued that their individual identities were not being recognized. Even in current times various ethnic members of the Asian population disagree with and look to change the API classification as they deem it incorrect and non-inclusive (Hune, 2002).

Generational differences and adaptation processes among immigrants.

The experiences of immigrant populations, including South Asians, vary by generation. First generation immigrants are individuals who were born, raised, and socialized in another country and moved to the U.S. as adults. Although it is important to note that first generation can apply to any individual born outside of the U.S. who immigrated at any age (Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Ramakrishnan, 2004; Rumbaut, 2004). Individuals who are second generation are those who were born and raised in the U.S. and have parents who were both born outside of the U.S., also known as the children of first generation immigrants (Ramakrishnan, 2004; Rumbaut, 2004). Individuals known as 1.5 generation immigrants are those people

who were born outside of the U.S. and immigrated with their families as children or adolescents, having had some socialization in their homeland (Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Rumbaut, 2004; Salam, 2004). Those who are considered 2.5 generation individuals are those with one parent who was born outside of the U.S. and one in the U.S. (Ramakrishnan, 2004). These are the broader terms used for immigrants; however, they can be processed even further. Immigrants who are 1.75 generation are those who immigrate to the U.S. with their families before the age of five. They are too young to remember their homeland, do not have formal schooling outside of the U.S., learn English without an accent, and typically mirror the experiences of second generation immigrants. Individuals who arrive between the ages of 13-17 are known as 1.25 generation immigrants. These immigrants have had more socialization in their homeland and typically enter the workforce in the U.S.; therefore, their experiences are more similar to first generation immigrants (Rumbaut, 2004). The experiences of 1.5 and second generation South Asian immigrants are the focus of this research.

Table 1

Definitions of generation statuses

Generation	Definition
1 st generation	Individuals who were born, raised, and socialized in a country outside of the U.S. and immigrated to the U.S. as adults
1.25 generation	Individuals who immigrate to the U.S. between the ages of 13-17
1.5 generation	Individuals who immigrated to the U.S. as children or adolescents after having had some socialization in their homeland
1.75 generation	Individuals who immigrated to U.S. prior to the age of five. These individuals characteristically emulate the experiences of 2 nd generation immigrants

2 nd generation	Individuals who were born and raised in the U.S. with both parents born and socialized outside of the U.S.
2.5 generation	Individuals with one U.S. born parent and one foreign born parent

Kim, Brenner, Liang, and Asay (2003) found that there are similarities among 1.5 generation immigrants and second generation immigrants; however, the process of acculturation, biculturation, assimilation, or identity rearticulation can lead to a different set of identity development struggles, including difficulty maintaining language and culture (Younos, 1998) while attempting to feel truly American (Park-Taylor et al., 2008). Acculturation refers to the process by which individuals reevaluate cultural norms as they integrate or assimilate the norms of the dominant culture in which they reside (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003). This process is also referred to as identity rearticulation (Shalinsky, 1996). Biculturation is the process of negotiating two identities, such as adapting one's cultural attire to what America deems appropriate (Bahl, 2005). Although biculturation does bear some similarities to acculturation, biculturation is when individuals hold two distinct and strong cultural orientations (Park-Taylor et al., 2008). Acculturation can be looked at in three manners: full, selective, and resisting (Ali, 2004; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Full acculturation is when immigrants attempt to become American by rejecting their own ethnic or religious identities. Selective acculturation is the process by which immigrants adopt useful characteristics of the dominant culture and disregard others. Finally, resisting acculturation is just that, the full resistance to accepting the dominant culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Similarly, there are three approaches to assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Trieu, 2004). The first is straight-line assimilation where immigrants fully assimilate into the dominant culture,

leaving all of their culture behind. The second is downward assimilation where immigrants adopt the culture of inner-city individuals along with their low socioeconomic status. The third, selective assimilation is where individuals maintain strong ethnic ties while assimilating enough to move up socially in the dominant culture.

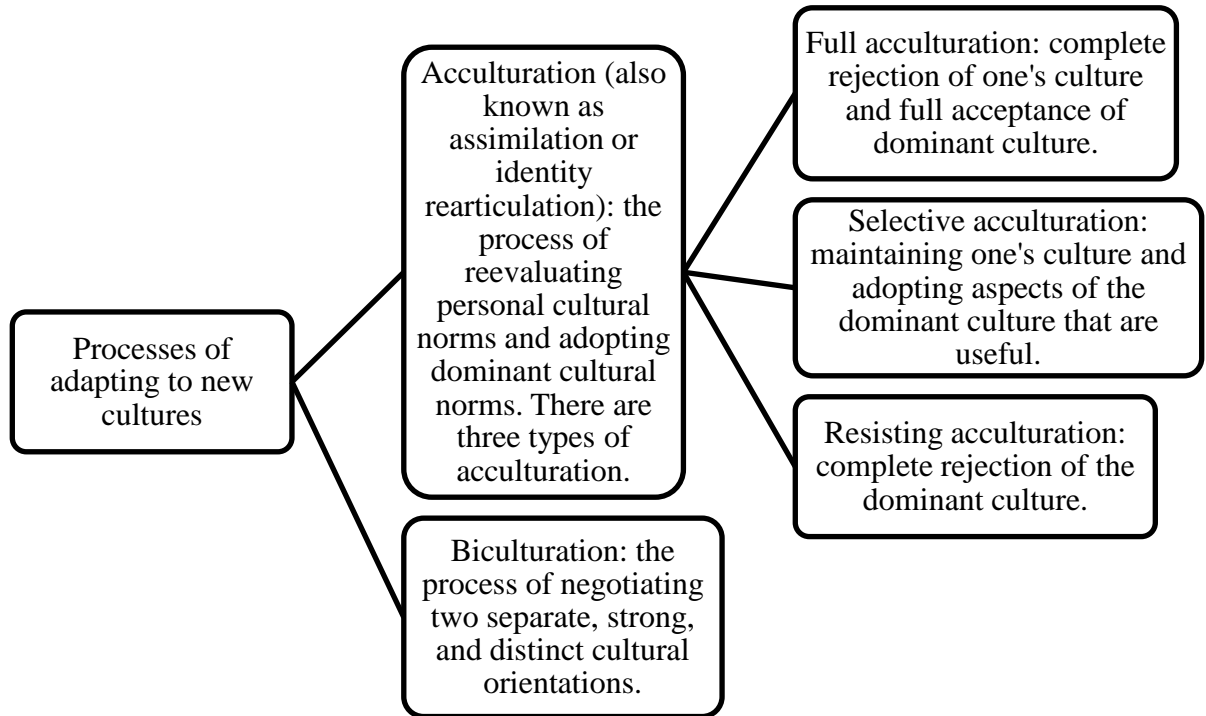


Figure 1: Processes of Adapting to New Cultures

South Asian immigrants to the U.S.

The South Asian population is no exception to the rules and challenges of acculturation and assimilation. When observing 1.5 generation and second generation South Asians, Americanization, the process of becoming American (Souto-Manning, 2007), can be seen in their life styles, clothing, and daily behaviors (Ali, 2004; Bahl, 2005; Sadat, 2008). In the attempt to create a sacred space within a host country, many families find their children drifting away from their culture into the dominant culture

(Brown & Talbot, 2006). Some South Asian families are finding that their children are ashamed of their cultural differences when they grow up in a Western society and are even Anglicizing their names (Shariff, 2009). 1.5 generation immigrants, as well as some second generation immigrants, find that they are increasingly expected to maintain their parent's cultural expectations (Ali, 2004; Sadat, 2009; Salam, 2004) and at the same time feel very alienated from their parents and ethnic cultural values (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). While some youth give up their desires to assimilate into American culture in order to keep their parents happy (Nawa, 1996), others continue on the path of assimilation through wearing Western clothing, participating in American social culture, and losing their language (Ali, 2004; Sadat, 2009). Immigrant families notice that their children tend to move away from using their language to mostly speaking English (Kumar, Trofimovich, & Gathbonton, 2008; Younos, 1998). This steadily becomes a difficult struggle as so many South Asian cultures believe that language is the key to keeping a culture alive. Language acculturation can occur in three ways (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Trieu, 2004). The first is dissonant acculturation where children acquire English more quickly than their parents and lose their native language at the same time. The second is consonant acculturation where both the parent and the child learn English together. The third is selective acculturation where individuals maintain their native language and learn English, becoming fluent in both (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Depending on the type of language acculturation, children become more and more distant from their parents and culture, or they become translators for their parents which can be

problematic as it switches the parent-child relationship, shifting the burden of navigating a new culture on the child (Azimi, 1998; Trieu, 2004; Younos, 1998).

Table 2

Language acculturation

Type of language acculturation	Definition
Dissonant acculturation	Immigrant children learn English more quickly than their parents and lose their native language
Consonant acculturation	Immigrant children and parents learn English together
Selective acculturation	Immigrants learn English while maintaining their native language and become fluent at both languages

Despite varying amounts of inevitable acculturation, some South Asian youth still claim they are never fully accepted in the dominant American culture (Nawa, 2001; Park-Taylor et al., 2008; Rostami-Povey, 2007). Although there is no one definition of American, most youth relate being American to having Anglo skin and features (Park-Taylor et al., 2008). Some would attribute not truly feeling American to the Orientalism that is faced by Asian people, including South Asians (Burr, 2002; Said, 1978). Orientalism is a stereotype in which Asian individuals are viewed as the Eastern “them” in opposition to the American or Western “us” (Burr, 2002, p. 836). At its foundation is the idea that Western culture and thought are superior to Asian and Eastern culture and thought. This Eurocentric and stereotypical attitude is the cause for some South Asians feeling they can never fully be viewed as American. Individuals who are second generation immigrants have shared similar feelings. At the same time, they have found that their biculturation has left them feeling that there is no place for them in their

parents' country or in America (Rostami-Povey, 2007). South Asians also experience these feelings throughout their educational journeys.

Immigrants and U.S. education.

The literature on immigration and its effects on education are vast, with only a small portion dedicated to the South Asian immigrant population. Immigrant children make up 20% percent of the U.S. population, an estimated one in five children or youth are from immigrant families (Hernandez, Denton, Macartney, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). For example, 20% of California's students and 48% percent of New York's students are from immigrant families (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The importance in these numbers is that these students are less likely than their parents to return to their homeland, therefore, moving through postsecondary education into U.S. society (Portes & MacLeod, 1999). There are several factors that influence the experiences and decisions of immigrant children to obtain an education. Among these factors are: parent's level of education in their homeland, cultural views on education, and families income or socioeconomic status in the U.S. (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2006; Fry, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Szalacha, Marks, Lamarre, & Colle, 2005).

Scholars have found that certain immigrant families emphasize education through their "cultures of optimism" and "ideologies of opportunity," hence making education a privilege to their children, not an option (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sullivan, 2009; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p.353). Studies have shown that there are inherent cultural values within immigrant cultures and families that create an expectation for education within the younger generation especially when compared to their White

counterparts. This is particularly true in the Asian population (Feliciano, 2006; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Among these cultural values are what Zhou & Bankston (1998) refer to as culturally specific strategies. The primary purpose of these strategies is to ensure that children and youth are not fully assimilating into American mainstream behavioral norms. For example, parents still maintain a firm grip on guidelines around discipline, homework, friendship, and dating to ensure that the children remain focused on education (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). By maintaining these strong ethnic identities, parents are ensuring that children maintain their cultural expectations around respecting elders, 1.5 and second generation individuals are internalizing the importance of education and avoiding downward assimilation (Aldous, 2006; Lee, 2006; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005).

Another factor that influences immigrant children to place great importance on education is their parents' educational background. Parents are said to bring in capital through their education, specifically if they had obtained a postsecondary education (Aldous, 2006; Chiswick & DebBurman, 2006; Fry, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Social capital is increased by educated parents since they are said to value education, instill those values in their children, and ultimately hold it as a requirement for their children and not an option (Fry, 2007, Yosso, 2005). While this brings capital into the home in terms of expectations for their children, most parents have obtained their postsecondary education outside of the U.S. and are not able to assist their children in navigating the educational system (Fry, 2007).

Socioeconomic status is the next factor that influences immigrants and their educational choices. While immigrants may come from higher socioeconomic statuses and educated backgrounds, their education and backgrounds do not always translate in the U.S. (Crosnoe, 2006; Nawa, 2001). Crosnoe (2006) has found that immigrant populations of color tend to be at an economic disadvantage in the U.S. despite having received postsecondary education and white collar positions within their countries of origin because their skills do not transfer into the U.S. (Louie, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Economic difficulties become a large reason for immigrant student college attrition; working to help feed their families becomes more crucial (Nawa, 2001). However, scholars (Aldous, 2006; Chiswick & DebBurman, 2006; Lee, 2006) have found that parental encouragement, no matter the socioeconomic status, results in their children attending college.

In spite of parental encouragement, studies (Fry, 2007; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005) show that 1.5 and second generation immigrants are not faring well in their education, including both high school and college. For example, 1.5 and second generation students are not attending school, graduating at the same rates as other students, and do not hold the same high grade point averages as their peers. The two factors playing a role in this educational collapse are finances and downward assimilation. As previously stated, immigrant families struggle financially in the U.S. (Crosnoe, 2006) and it is this economic disparity that leads their youth towards downward assimilation (Fry, 2007; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005). However, these findings are inconclusive due to the fact that other studies (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, &

Sullivan, 2009) are discovering that second generation immigrants are excelling due to their cultures of optimism (Aldous, 2006; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Another possibility second generation immigrant students are excelling is due to their parents arriving at an early enough age to be socialized in the U.S. (Glick & Hohmann-Marriot, 2007).

Pan-ethnic Asian immigrants in U.S. education.

Within this immigrant student population, in 1997 Asians earned 4.4% of the total associate degrees, 5.8% of the total bachelor's degrees, 4.5% of the total master's degrees, 4.8% of total doctoral degrees, and 9% of the professional degrees awarded (Hune, 2002). Within the South Asian population, Indians are the group with the most educated individuals. In comparison to the overall national population Indians are 2.5 times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree, 3.5 times more likely to have a master's degree, and 4.75 times more likely to have a doctorate (Deepak, 2005). Statistics such as these and studies (Aldous, 2006; Feliciano, 2006; Louie, 2005) that state Asian students are excelling well beyond their ethnic peers, are among the reasons why Asian students are frequently left out of the student of color disparity dialogue (Deepak, 2005). These statistics and studies paint Asian students as what is known as the model minority (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sullivan, 2009; Lee, 1994; Museus, 2008). The model minority stereotype states that Asians, including South Asians, are exceptional in their academic endeavors, therefore, they do not suffer microaggressions in the academy and do not require intervention to help them succeed in school. Contrary to this stereotype, there are Asian students who struggle at all levels of education (Bhattacharya, 2000; Lee,

1994; Museus, 2008). Asian students who struggle, oftentimes are attempting to excel in all levels of education in order to fulfill the expectations of their families. Additionally, they experience what is known as stereotype threat in that they are expected to do well in academics (Steele & Aronson, 1995); thereby, they do not seek academic assistance out of embarrassment (Lee, 1994).

Focusing on Asian women specifically, pan-ethnic specific statistics are unavailable; women are excelling and graduating at higher and faster rates than Asian men (Brandon, 1990; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005). Within the pan-ethnic Asian population, during 1997 women earned 57% of all associate degrees, 53% of all bachelor's degrees, 54% of all master's degrees, 46% of all professional degrees, and 43% of doctoral degrees (Hune, 2002). There are a few studies (Brandon, 1990; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005) that suggest why Asian women excel at greater rates and numbers than men. Brandon (1990) has found that one reason is that Asian women acculturate more easily than men, therefore, assisting them in the American social transition which filters into school. The second idea is that women are taking hold of the educational opportunities afforded to them in the U.S. because the same opportunities would most likely not be available to them in their country, specifically if they come from a patriarchal culture. The third suggestion is that women are more socially controlled than men in Asian cultures (Brandon, 1990). In turn, these controls and gender role expectations translate into obedience on behalf of daughters (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005). The obligation to obedience stems into the classroom where second generation Asian women are studious, excel in education, pursue postsecondary

education, and establish successful careers (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 2001). Finally, second generation Asian females are more likely to maintain their native language, resulting in better communication with their parents and ability to fulfill parental aspirations (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

CRF and immigrant women.

It is evident that 1.5 and second generation immigrant Asian women face gender and race-based discrimination within the U.S. Coming from an immigrant population does not lessen the marginalizing experiences of these women, since by definition they are arriving in the U.S. at a young enough age to have been socialized in this country (Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Inman, 2006) and share the experiences of other women of color (Wing, 2000). Hence, through the use of CRF, it becomes evident that the discussion around race and gender must move away from a Black/White binary. By moving away from this binary, scholars are better able to understand Asian women's experiences through social constructs and social relations as opposed to skin color (Hua, 2003). In utilizing and understanding intersectionality, knowledge of social identities and statuses is desirable. Asian women and immigrant families experience a social identity and social class shift in the U.S. that plays a role in their experiences in U.S. education. In some instances immigrant families leave their statuses of educated, upper-class society in their country and upon entering the U.S. immediately become part of the lower-class. They also enter into a society that does not recognize their degrees or credentials from their homelands (Louie, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

For example, men and women who held professional degrees and positions in their homeland immigrate to the U.S. and can only find work in the service industry. Further, CRF frameworks bring forth the dialogue of racism and sexism to a population that is deemed as a model minority and not in need of educational reforms that include women of color in the discourse (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sullivan, 2009; Lee, 1994; Museus, 2008).

Gender and Culture: Influence of South Asian Cultural and Gender Norms on the Pursuit of Postsecondary Education

Culture can be defined in many ways through many lenses; however, culture is rarely motionless especially for diaspora cultures. For the purpose of this literature review, culture refers to practices and ideals that are cultivated, assembled, and exhibited by a group of people (Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Garcia, 2007). South Asian culture, just as any other culture, has specific gender norms that individuals are expected to follow. Through the body of literature which details the cultured and gendered experiences of South Asian women, I will describe elements of South Asian culture as well as the role of gender and its impact on college choice for South Asian women (Deepak, 2005; Inman, 2006; Salam 2004).

The Asian region spans over a vast number of countries. A few countries which are considered Asia are Japan, China, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan (Deepak, 2005; Miyahara & Meyers, 2008). Considering the vast difference in culture, religion, and distance between some of these countries, it is important to note that Asians are not a homogenous people (Hussain

& Cochrane, 2002). However, some generalizations can be brought to countries located in the same sub-category of Asia. For example, East Asian countries tend to share the same religions, cultural expectations, and experiences just as Central Asian and South Asian countries do among themselves (Inman, 2006; Poon & Hune, 2009). It is worthy of noting that no one country has the exact same religion or culture, however, the similarities in sub-regions are greater than across the entire span of Asia (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Moghadam, 1992).

Cultural norms and expectations in the South Asian community.

South Asian communities are filled with cultural expectations surrounding language, gender roles, honor, and social behaviors. Language is a large part of South Asian cultures and a way of constructing that culture and reality, especially to people who have been displaced from their home land (Carbado, 2002; Kumar, Trofimovich, & Gatbonton, 2008; Younos, 1998). Furthermore, language is the means by which these individuals maintain their culture in a foreign land (Kumar, Trofimovich, & Gatbonton, 2008). Maintaining language is a means in which this community validates its culture through claiming its language as a knowledge base and a catalyst for interpersonal and social skills (Younos, 1998). However, if language is a determining factor of the strength of cultural values, South Asian cultures are at risk as second generation individuals increasingly speak English more frequently than their native language (Kumar, Trofimovich, & Gatbonton, 2008).

South Asian cultures are highly patriarchal and typically consist of clear gender hierarchies (Burr, 2002; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Moghadam, 1992). Patriarchal

cultures are cultures in which the power, principles, and rules are governed by the eldest male in the family (Moghadam, 1992). In the patriarchal family structures of South Asian families, girls and women are expected to adhere to restrictive behavior codes, gender segregation, and safeguarding family honor by viewing it as the same as female virtue (Burr, 2002; Moghadam, 1992). South Asian cultures place a great emphasis on the needs of the collective and interdependency in which most decisions are made as a family unit (Gupta & Johnstone, & Gleeson, 2007). Furthermore, this patriarchal system prevents youth from having control in their lives or making decisions without consulting their family (Gupta, Johnstone, & Gleeson, 2007).

South Asian women live in a steady socialization system of negotiating their bicultural identities (Ali, 2004; Inman, 2006; Salam, 2004; Hussain & Cochrane, 2002). Cultural norms place restrictions and expectations on the behaviors of South Asian women (Hussain & Cochrane, 2002; Salam, 2004). These expectations become steadily difficult to manage as these women become increasingly accustomed to American culture and society (Salam, 2004). Nearly from the onset of birth, boys and girls are taught that certain behaviors are expected from boys and from girls (Salam, 2004). According to Salam (2004), these behaviors consist of girls attending cultural activities which will keep them under parental supervision while boys are permitted to explore the American social scene. Simply stated, these women are expected to be American outside of the home and South Asian in the home, whereas men are more frequently permitted to express their acculturated identities (Bahl, 2005). These rules, in turn, create a situation where South Asian women are required to live double lives, one which incorporates

American culture and rituals and a sterile version for their parents and community (Ali, 2004). These double lives are what become situational identities, which is a compartmentalization of American identities and their South Asian identities, always to be kept separate (Arora, 2006). Although to the parents of these South Asian women, their rules may seem lenient in comparison to their home lands, it appears that very little shift occurs in the treatment of boys and girls (Shalinsky, 1996). Even in America, South Asian women bear the burden of maintaining culture, traditions, and customs (Asher, 2006; Dasgupta, 1998; Inman, 2006).

Gender norms, expectations, and differences in South Asian culture.

The greatest gender separation among South Asians becomes apparent in the way they are expected to socialize in American culture (Ali, 2004; Salam, 2004). In the socialization of American young adult activities such as going dancing, drinking, and dating are all common and acceptable practices. For South Asian young adults, these are social activities which are deemed culturally unacceptable. However, if parents find out that their children have been participating in the American social scene, they are more likely to forgive, forget, or even ignore their male children's actions over their female children (Ali, 2004; Salam, 2004). South Asian males report that they would be treated differently by their parents and the community for their actions if they were female and that their sisters have stricter rules by which to abide (Nawa, 2001; Salam, 2004). Unlike South Asian males, females are expected to stay home, learn how to cook, clean, be obedient, show modesty and humility, and prepare for their futures as good wives and mothers (Burr, 2002), maintaining a good girl image for parents and community so that a

suitable man will marry her (Salam, 2004). Some women marry in hopes of gaining more autonomy in their lives (Nawa, 2001).

Dating and marriage are the next largest issue in the lives of young adult South Asian men and women. Both men and women are expected to marry within their culture and religion, however, maintaining ties to ethnic traditions becomes exceedingly difficult for young adults in this population as they enter America's mainstream social society and begin dating (Ali, 2004; Nawa, 2001; Salam, 2004). Dating is considered unacceptable by South Asian cultures with a few exceptions. The first exception is made for men, parents will often pretend they do not know or even state that their sons are simply having fun and will marry someone from their ethnic group when they are ready (Ali, 2004). However, the same exceptions are not made for their daughters, their actions are usually more closely monitored to ensure that they are not dating (Ali, 2004; Nawa, 2001). The second exception that is made is when South Asians date within their ethnic group with the intent of marrying. Therefore, the relationship is kept secret until they are ready to speak to their parents about marrying each other. Within this exception, the man's parents are less likely to get upset than the woman's, even though the dating is resulting in marriage (Nawa, 2001). There appear to be three main reasons as to why dating is prohibited, mainly for women. The first is that South Asian parents do not approve of premarital sex for their daughters. In the South Asian community, if daughters are sexually active and community members become aware of this, they are dishonoring their family and ruining their chances of getting married. The repercussion of premarital sex for women can range from a low to high-level punishment from parents;

including, but not limited to, the requirement to end the relationship and being disowned from the family (Nawa, 2001; Salam, 2004). The second reason why dating is prohibited in the South Asian communities is because it is not something that is practiced in their homeland and they view this act as another part of Americanization that is moving their children further from their culture (Salam, 2004). The third explanation as to why dating is not allowed is because of religion. Some South Asian religions, such as Islam, state that dating is a sin and that men and women should not be engaging in behavior that could lead to sexual activity before they are married (Ali, 2004; Nawa, 2001). The fourth reason is that most South Asian parents simply do not want their children to marry outside of their religion for fear that their grandchildren will not have the same cultural and religious values (Ali, 2004; Nawa, 2001; Salam, 2004).

The restrictions placed on dating create difficult situations around marriage. In some cases, South Asian men and women meet, date secretly, and the relationship ends up in a marriage in which both sets of parents approve of the union (Nawa, 2001; Salam, 2004). In other situations, South Asians make the difficult decision to marry outside of their ethnic group and religion. For men this is a more forgivable action because the community does not respond with gossip or disapproval since the family honor is carried by daughters not sons (Salam, 2004). For women this action can result in being disowned, or being ostracized, but allowed to remain in the community (Yusuf, 2007). One way South Asian women who marry out of their culture and religion are accepted is if their future spouse agrees to convert to their religion (Ali, 2004; Salam, 2004). In some instances the conversion is true, in others it is a means to bridge the two worlds into

one and keep from being disowned. Some parents say that they know the conversion is a sham; however, it saves them face and stops the community from gossiping (Salam, 2004). In other situations, parents say they are glad their daughter is marrying because daughters who reach a certain age and are not married can become the root of community gossip as well (Ali, 2004).

In order to avoid the Americanization of dating and exogamous marriage, some parents will arrange their children's marriage. Arranged marriage is not to be confused with forced marriage; in arranged marriages both parties consent to the marriage albeit more of a business deal than a love match (Takhar, 2009). Since dating is viewed as part of American culture, some South Asian parents do not view arranged marriages as a foreign concept. However, for South Asian men and women who have been raised in a Western culture with ideals of dating, romance, and love, arranged marriages can cause great distress (Salam, 2004). The distress is more profound in women than men because men, generally speaking, are able to date and marry with more ease than women; therefore, they have the option of escaping an arranged marriage (Ali, 2004; Salam, 2004). However, for women who are under strict supervision, and for the men whose marriage is arranged with them, the marriage takes place to please the family and can occur at a cost to their psychological and emotional well-being (Burr, 2002; Hussain & Cochrane, 2002).

The restrictions put forth and inability to make decisions (Gupta, Johnstone, & Gleeson, 2007) can lead to a great deal of depression (Hussain & Cochrane, 2002). In order to alleviate these feelings of depression and gain some autonomy, some choose to

move away from their cultures and communities. The emotional costs and other repercussions of choosing autonomy over family are greater for women than men (Salam, 2004). Often this choice results in women being disowned from their families and larger community (Takhar, 2009). This in turn can create a great deal of isolation in their lives accompanied by feelings of guilt for choosing their happiness over their family's happiness (Salam, 2004).

CRF, gender, and culture in South Asian communities.

Through the epistemological and analytical guidance of the intersectional nature of CRF (Wing, 2003), an understanding of biculturation coupled with gender role expectations that are governed through a patriarchal system (Salam, 2004) will provide a foundation for understanding South Asian women's experiences within the broader society and choices to obtain a postsecondary education. Intersectionality theory states that to appreciate the lives of women of color, one must come to an understanding of the intersections of race and gender. It should further be understood that women of color are not White women plus color or men of color plus gender; thereby being a multiplicative identity (Andersen, 2005; Wing, 2003). Through intersectionality, South Asian women's individual social identities influence their experiences and beliefs surrounding gender. Social identities are those group identities in which these women claim a membership and associate personal meaning (Shields, 2008). For example, South Asian women claim membership in their Asian identities, American identities, and female identities; all of which have importance, intersect with each other, and create multiplicative identities. An understanding of the importance of the intersectional nature of identity sheds light on the

challenge of viewing women as unique and whole in their multidimensionality (Andersen, 2005; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

The effects of gender and culture on South Asian women's decision to pursue education.

The intersection of cultural expectations, gender norms, and being a South Asian woman in America all play a role in women's choices to obtain a postsecondary education (Asher, 2006). Most studies show that South Asian parents expect educational and financial success from both their male and female children, although there are some that state education is more important for their sons because men are responsible for taking care of their families (Nawa, 2001; Salam, 2004). Therefore, keeping in line with being an obedient daughter, many of these women continue onto a postsecondary education (Asher, 2006; Salam, 2004). One reason parents encourage their daughters to go to college is because women are required to marry or go to school and then marry (Salam, 2004; Shavarini, 2006). Parents encourage their daughters to pursue higher education as it will increase their prestige as well as their family prestige (Jansen, 2006). Women who are educated are viewed as having come from a good family, more attractive, and worthy of an equally acceptable husband. Higher education provides them "social mobility through marriage" rather than through an esteemed career (Shavarini, 2006, p1973). Capital is most definitely a factor in the issue of female education. It is apparent through much of the research that the main goal for families supporting their daughters to obtain a higher education is so that it will result in capital (Shavarini, 2006; Jansen, 2006). Capital comes in many forms, such as social, financial, and human

(Yosso, 2005). Capital has been defined as assets which can generate income at a future date. Human capital has been measured as both parents having education and that education creating an environment for children which is conducive to learning (Coleman, 1988 as cited in Halsey, Lauder, Brown, and Wells, 1997). Education will enhance the woman's financial capital through the enhancement of social capital which is obtained through her being an acceptable (i.e., educated) wife for a socially elite man (Shavarini, 2006). Through this cycle, she will be able to provide her children with human capital and continue meeting societal expectations (Takhar, 2009). Conversely, some women pursue postsecondary education to prolong getting married (Shavarini, 2006).

At the intersection of being a woman and being South Asian are cultural based gender restrictions that leave women feeling isolated, depressed, and desiring autonomy (Gupta, Johnstone, & Gleeson, 2007; Hussain & Cochrane, 2002). The desire to obtain autonomy through education is another reason why some South Asian women pursue a postsecondary education (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Nawa, 2001; Shavarini, 2006). It has not been shown that obtaining a higher education results in autonomy within this patriarchal culture (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Nawa, 2001; Shavarini, 2006), nor does it alleviate the tensions experienced from biculturation (Inman, 2006).

Higher Education: The Experiences of South Asian Women in U.S. Postsecondary Education

The literature on South Asian women in U.S. higher education provides examples of why South Asian women choose to continue into graduate school; the impact of race and gender on their experiences; and the personal and social transformations that occur as

a result of South Asian women's choice to obtain graduate degrees (Sadeghi, 2007; Shavarini, 2005; Yusuf, 2007). I begin by exploring the literature on women, followed by that on women of color, and then on South Asian women.

Women in U.S. postsecondary education.

Women account for the majority of bachelor's degree recipients and yet they receive fewer doctoral degrees than men (Beeler, 1993; Perna, 2004; Schmidt, 2008). Drew and Work (1998) have found that women find college campuses to be continuously hostile and unwelcoming and the fact that they are present in the traditionally patriarchal academy does not mean they have power (Bierema, 2003). Women have found that gender discrimination is still alive in the classroom (Myers & Dugan, 1996; Tisdell, 1993). Scholars (Myers & Dugan, 1996; Perna, 2004) have found that the readings, class discussions, and opinions that are valued are often androcentric, or centered on the male experience. Myers & Dugan (1996) report women find that male students dominate classroom conversations, often times at the cost of other women being silenced. Women graduate students also report discrimination in their interactions with their advisors in comparison to male graduate students (Drew & Work, 1998). Women are not receiving the proper guidance and advice to navigate through graduate school (Beeler, 1993; Drew & Work, 1998). Although women's aspirations for doctorate degrees have increased three-fold over the past three decades (Astin, 1990), the records of widespread discrimination still exist (Holmstrom & Holmstrom, 1974). There are general feelings of gender oppression among women as a whole; however, there is a deeper level of oppression for women of color.

Women of color in U.S. postsecondary education.

Scholars (Ellis, 2001; Harris, 2007; Molina, 2008; Shah, 2007) have found that women of color in doctoral programs not only experience gender oppression but they are even further impacted by racism. Women of color experience negative interactions, such as racism and discrimination, due to their race in the classroom and on campus (Carter, 1996; Landry, 2002; Rains, 1995; Sethi, 2002). They are held back or away from research and teaching opportunities that are given to their White counterparts before it is offered, if ever, to them (Withorn, 1986), which stems from the belief that minority students are less academically capable than White students (Hune, 2006; Schnellmann & Gibbons, 1984; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Their interactions with advisors and mentors leave them isolated, unsupported and invalidated in that they do not receive proper guidance, mentorship, or are unable to build a support network (Daniel, 2007; Ellis, 2001; Fong, 2007; Mahtani, 2004; Turner, 1993; Turner & Thompson, 1996; Turner, 2002), a support that is needed for success in doctoral programs (Nettles, 1990). They have also found the environment of their departments has been unwelcoming and does not represent or support them by having faculty and staff of color (Turner, 2007). Finally, they have had poor social experiences with peers, which have been shown to be an important factor in retention (Ellis, 2001; Turner, 1993).

Within the literature on women, studies on women of color are relatively rare (Rains, 1995). Among the literature on women of color, the experience of African American and Latina women are documented the most (Aronson & Swanson, 1991; Cuadraz, 1996; Ellis, 2001; Johnson & Arbona, 2006; Rosales & Person, 2003). The

literature on African American women in graduate programs show experiences with racism, sexism, isolation, and a lack of socialization (Ellis, 2001; Rosales & Person, 2003). The role of African American women as providers of knowledge in the classroom is often minimized (Watt, 2006) and their desire to share their opinions is misjudged as being aggressive or overly opinionated (Kane & Kyyro, 2001; Morris, 2007), leading African American women to experience a great amount of race-related stress (Johnson & Arbona, 2006). The literature on Latino women in graduate studies show the same experiences with racism, sexism, and other marginalizing experiences as shown in the literature on African American women graduate students (Cuadraz, 1996; Escobedo, 1980; Espino, 2008).

Asian women in U.S. postsecondary education.

The literature on Asian women in higher education is the second largest within the writings on women of color, and mainly speaks to the experiences of East Asian women (Torok, 2002). East Asian women report similar experiences as African American and Latina women in terms of racism and sexism; however, there are differences in how racism and sexism are experienced. For example, East Asian women report being treated as the model minority, as though they did and would excel in all academic disciplines (Museus, 2008; Poon & Hune, 2009; Teranishi, 2002). East Asian women are often left out of the race-related discussions as they are not seen as a valid minority group because of their large numerical representation on college campuses, claiming that marginalization and isolation have decreased (Poon & Hune, 2009; Teranishi, 2002). Being excluded from the race discussion can render these students

invisible, however, East Asians are also viewed as the perpetual foreigner or as people who are never able to fully assimilate into American culture and language, rendering them highly visible in academia (Poon & Hune, 2009). Gender discrimination is experienced almost daily by this group of women. They experience sexism and racism through the stereotypes of being a China doll, lotus blossom, exotic, docile, and delicate (Hune, 2006; Poon & Hune, 2009; Shrake, 2006). As a result, East Asian women are viewed as sexual objects who cannot be taken seriously as academics (Shrake, 2006) despite the lack in evidence for such a claim (Lee, 2006) and a direct contradiction to the model minority stereotype. The most detrimental assumption to the entire pan-Asian student population is the belief that all Asians are a homogenous group and are East Asian (Poon & Hune, 2009; Teranishi, 2002).

South Asian women in U.S. postsecondary education.

The assumption that all Asians are one homogenous people has led South Asian women to be left out of the academic discourse (Hussain & Bagguley, 2007). Scholars (Gupta, 1998; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997; Kibria, 1998; Shankar, 1998) have found that South Asians do not identify with the Asian classification because they believe there is a difference; as a result, they are left out of academic writings, curricula, and classrooms (Hsiao, 1998). Due to the scarcity of information on South Asian women's experiences in U.S. higher education (Badrudjoja, 2006; Hussain & Bagguley, 2007), parallels will be drawn from the literature on South Asian women's experiences in Canadian and U.K. higher education.

South Asian women experience similar interactions in higher education as do other women of color. In some regards they are identical and in others they can be quite different. Women of color as a whole are left out of the literature in higher education (Rains, 1995), however, South Asian women's lack of representation, both physical and in text, have created encounters with hidden racism (Sadeghi, 2007). Hidden racism stems from the fact that South Asians, typically, do not identify as Asian, thereby making them the unknown or other race. Due to what appears to outsiders as racial ambiguity, any racism they may suffer is hidden because their experiences are not brought to light and solved since they do not identify with a larger race category (Gupta, 1998; Hussain & Bagguley, 2007). Unfortunately, incidences of racism have been recorded in the classroom, on campus, and in the admissions process against South Asian women. Hussain & Bagguley (2007) have found that South Asian women were discriminated against when applying to medical school and their White counterparts were given priority over them. The small amount of studies (Asher, 2006; Gupta, 1998; Nawa; 2001) which discuss the actual experiences of South Asian women in higher education fail to take into account the intersections of race, gender, culture, and religion, and solely focuses on racist actions not the root of the actions. Racism on college campuses is said to have stemmed from the racism within the larger society as well as the projection of stereotypes from White students and staff. Many South Asian women report being the first South Asian with whom their White counterparts have had class; as a result they are treated as the other, exotic, and as though their company was a novelty (Hussain & Bagguley, 2007; Yusuf, 2007). White students and staff question the presence of South Asian women by

asking if their families are accepting of their decision to pursue higher education and if they were simply destined for marriage, afterward, without hopes for a career (Hussain & Bagguley, 2007). This adds to the burden of having to correct myths and stereotypes about South Asian women.

In addition, since the group is not viewed as having needs, or one that experiences racism or sexism, there is very little scholarship on South Asian student groups on college campuses. These hidden injuries occur to East Asians under the assumption that a critical mass creates a safe campus, and they happen to South Asians because they are typically the only ones in the classroom, therefore, becoming invisible (Poon & Hune, 2009) and a minority among the minorities (Das & Kemp, 1997). Being the only one creates a prime environment for South Asian women to feel isolated and have to deal with answering for their entire race or ethnicity (Hussain & Bagguley, 2007; Poon & Hune, 2009; Yusuf, 2007). South Asian women report disappointment upon arriving at a university that states it values diversity and being the only South Asian in the classroom with no faculty or mentors of color (Poon & Hune, 2009; Sinha, 1998; Yusuf, 2007). This experience, in particular, has left many South Asian students wondering why there are no support groups, student groups that are pan-Asian (Sinha, 1998). Sinha (1998) states that South Asian women experience the same marginalization as East Asian women in terms of being stereotyped as a model minority and exotic; therein should lie enough evidence that South Asian students need support and a space in the academic discourse as well. However, as stated previously, East Asian students are not viewed as a valid minority either, therefore, making the marginalization a pan-ethnic experience

(Poon & Hune, 2009; Teranishi, 2002). Scholars (Gupta, 1998; Hussain & Bagguley, 2007; Yusuf, 2007) state that in order for South Asian women to succeed and persist they must feel a sense of solidarity, comfort, and acceptance within a like-group that can give the ingredients for self-preservation within graduate programs.

CRF and the experiences of South Asian women in postsecondary education.

Through the use of CRF the multiple dimensions of South Asian women can be embraced and understood. These multiple dimensions, or intersectionality, are where race and gender intersect in the lives of women of color (Allen, 1998; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Molina, 2008; Wing, 2003).

At the intersection of race and gender stand women of color, torn by the lines of bias that currently divide [White] from non [White] in our society, and male from female. The worlds these women negotiate demand different and often wrenching allegiances. As a result, women of color face significant obstacles to their full participation in and contribution to higher education. (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996)

To combat the difficulties at the intersections of race and gender, and in the lives of South Asian women, culture and religion as well, CRF can assist South Asian women in finding their place in academia. CRF challenges dominant ideals and places women of color in an honored position where their voices and perspectives are valued in the academy (Poon & Hune, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Teranishi, 2002). The perspectives of women of color in the academy are also known as counter-narratives (Delgado Bernal, 2002). These counter-narratives can be the key to understanding the hidden racism and blatant sexism that South Asian women experience on college campuses and become the catalyst for changing the dominant discourse to include the minority within the minorities. South Asian women's contribution to higher education

can be fully understood and appreciated when it is understood that the intersection of their identities are not tangential to their work as academics (Aronson & Swanson, 1991).

Conclusion

The findings of this literature review have allowed me to better understand the factors that influence the experiences of South Asian women and ultimately Afghan women, in U.S. higher education. Immigration, culture, and gender all influence the experiences that South Asian women have both inside and outside of the classroom. The previous three factors also weigh in heavily on South Asian women's choice to obtain a postsecondary education. Finally, the current literature and experiences of South Asian women in postsecondary education provide evidence as to why this group of women may or may not choose to go to college.

South Asian women who are 1.5 generation and 2nd generation immigrants deal with the challenges of assimilation, language barriers, and their parents' cultural views of education (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003). Furthermore, many immigrant families face financial barriers after being displaced from their homelands and this can affect the availability of resources for their children's education. Many children of immigrants also feel the pressure of contributing to the family's income, therefore choosing to work instead of pursuing an education (Crosnoe, 2006).

The next set of factors that affect South Asian women's experience in education is gender and culture. There are distinct differences in how South Asian women are expected to behave as opposed to South Asian men. These differences are seen in the home and outside of the home in terms of how each group is expected to behave socially

(Ali, 2004; Hussain & Cochrane, 2002; Salam, 2004). Due to the importance placed on social mobility in the South Asian culture, there are also expectations surrounding postsecondary education. Many South Asian women are expected to maintain their family's social standing by obtaining a higher education and, in turn, becoming a better candidate for marriage (Jansen, 2006). Yet, other South Asian women choose to pursue a higher education in order to gain autonomy from their restrictive family structures and cultures (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001).

Lastly, the experiences of South Asian women in U.S. postsecondary institutions often mirror those of other women of color. One distinct difference is that South Asian women are left out of the diversity discourse because they are either lumped in with all Asians or are viewed as not having needs on a college campus because of their model minority status (Hussain & Baguley, 2007). The lack of literature and knowledge about South Asian women in higher education has led me to develop a model to better understand the experiences of South Asian women in U.S. postsecondary education.

Conceptual model: Towards an understanding of South Asian women in postsecondary education.

The following model, based on factors that affect the journey to and experiences in postsecondary education for South Asian women, is a visual representation of the findings of this literature review. I have identified four major factors that affect South Asian women's choice to pursue postsecondary education and then affect their experiences while in college. Culture, gender, immigrant status, and college experiences are all influential factors.

The restraints of social behavior in order to achieve social mobility are the main issues affecting South Asian women. This process of socialization affects their choice to pursue a postsecondary education because they may need it in order to gain access to respectable social circles within their communities, however, their restrictions affect when and where they can attend college. Gender is closely tied in with culture as the literature shows that social restrictions are placed on women more frequently than men (Ali, 2004; Salam, 2004). Therefore, culture and gender affect South Asian women's choice in pursuing a college education due to the fact that they may feel social pressure to do so but are not receiving the proper support to reach that goal. In this situation, support would be given in terms of autonomy and having the right to choose a school that meets their needs as opposed to one that keeps them close to home.

The next factor in the model is immigration. Within immigration the most influential features are the cultural and language assimilation as well as the socioeconomic piece. Assimilation, both cultural and linguistic, affect South Asian women's choice to go to college because of the barriers that may be presented due to not being permitted to assimilate into American culture as much as their male counterparts. Some South Asian parents may view extensive education as becoming too American. The socioeconomic status of some immigrant families also affect South Asian women's pursuit of education, specifically if they are the eldest child and are required to help contribute to the family income.

The final factor in the model is that of South Asian women's experiences in college, mainly the racism and sexism they experience along with the exclusion from the

diversity dialogue. The experiences that South Asian women have in higher education can become a possible deterrent to those who have not decided to attend college. Furthermore, these issues can lead to high attrition rates among South Asian women due to the lack of support on college campuses. Additionally, the current treatment of South Asian women in the academy does not serve as encouragement for them to pursue careers in academe. A combination of these matters creates a cycle that keeps South Asian women out of the academy.

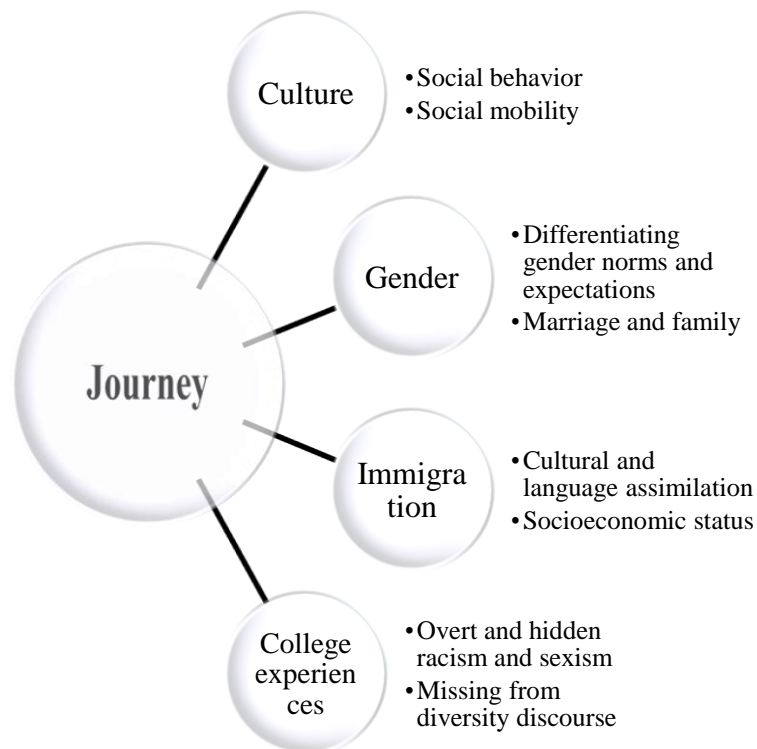


Figure 2: Factors that affect South Asian women's journey to and experiences in postsecondary education

This model helps to identify the most salient factors in South Asian women's choice to obtain a postsecondary education. It does so by providing a visual guide of the complex nature of their decision-making process. Even further, it allows me to see that

the four factors not only have multiple facets but that those facets can intertwine with each other. For example, gender norms for South Asian women are set forth as a result of cultural guidelines which can become blurred as a result of the assimilation required as an immigrant to this country. Not only do these factors affect South Asian women's choice to attend college but also affect their experiences in the academy because it is embedded in their ways of understanding the world as a woman of color and as a South Asian woman.

Summary

Chapter two provided an understanding of the factors that affect South Asian women's journey towards higher education as a means of exploring the factors that affect Afghan women in doctoral programs. In chapter three I present an overview of the methods and methodology I used in the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Exploration of various research methodologies suggests that narrative inquiry is the method which will best provide insight about Afghan women and their journey towards pursuing a doctoral degree. Narrative inquiry allows for the story of Afghan women entering the academic discourse while maintaining the importance of oral traditions within the Afghan culture as well as the provision of a counter-narrative as described in critical race feminism works (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Wing, 2003). In addition, narrative inquiry provides a foundation for the empowerment of marginalized voices of Afghan women within the United States and Afghan culture. In the next section narrative inquiry is discussed in greater depth as well as how it relates to the oral traditions of Afghan culture and its importance to feminist researchers.

Narrative Inquiry

“The idea of narrative inquiry is that stories are collected as a means of understanding experiences as lived and told, through both research and literature” (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p. 459). The goal of narrative inquiry is to fully comprehend a phenomenon through an understanding of its historical context and to access the human story in its entirety (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). In this regard, narrative inquiry is said to transcend biography, life story, and autobiography. Through the human story a

temporal unity is created (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) state that

A story...tells a sequence of events that are significant for the narrator [the respondent/social actor] and his or her audience. A narrative as a story has a plot, a beginning, a middle and an end. It has internal logic that makes sense to the narrator. A narrative relates events in a temporal, causal sequence. Every narrative describes a sequence of events that have happened. Hence narratives are temporal productions. (p. 55)

Chase (2005) provides five analytical lenses from which to view the uses of narrative inquiry and how narrative inquiry is utilized by researchers. The first lens describes how narrative researchers treat narrative inquiry. This lens describes the narrative researcher as one who treats all forms of narrative, both written and oral, as an individual form of narrative. In essence, narrative is viewed as meaning-making through historical accounts, the organization of events, and the outcome of actions throughout time. Contrary to a chronology, narratives report a sequence of events while adding the human element of emotions and thoughts. Through this lens, the researcher captures the uniqueness of each person rather than creating one common story (Chase, 2005). The second lens states that researchers “view narratives as verbal action—as doing or accomplishing something” (Chase, 2005, p. 657). This lens suggests that social change is created via the introduction of a missing voice into the dominant discourse. By doing so, the status quo is challenged and a new reality is created. Even further, “although narrators are accountable for the credibility of their stories, narrative researchers treat credibility and believability as something that storytellers accomplish” (Chase, 2005, p. 657; Lincoln, 2000). The third lens purports that narrative researchers believe that stories are inhibited and/or encouraged depending on the individual’s life situation.

These include the possibilities for self and reality construction that are intelligible with the narrator's community, local setting, organizational and social memberships, and cultural and historical location. While acknowledging that every instance of narrative is particular, researchers use this lens to attend to similarities and differences across narratives. (Chase, 2005, p. 657)

The fourth lens states that narrative researchers view each narrative as contextual.

Contextual in the sense that the environment and audience play a role in how the story is told or performed. For example, the way a story is told will differ when it is written in a private journal versus a platform that will become public display. This lens suggests that the relationship between the narrator and listener play a role in shaping the story (Chase, 2005). The fifth and final lens states that narrative researchers view themselves as the narrators in this type of research, making the previous four lenses applicable to the researcher and the researched.

Breaking from traditional social science practice, narrative researchers are likely to use the first person when presenting their work, thereby emphasizing their own narrative action. As narrators, then, researchers develop their own voice(s) as they construct others' voices and realities; they narrate "results" in ways that are both enabled and constrained by the social resources and circumstances embedded in their disciplines, cultures, and historical moments; and they write or perform their work for particular audiences. (Chase, 2005, p. 657)

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) state that narratives and stories can be collected through observing the participant in their natural setting. In addition, narratives can be collected through articles, books, transcripts, and films. However, the most common form of collecting narrative inquiry data is through interviews.

Benefits of and challenges with narrative inquiry.

As with any research method, there are benefits and challenges that arise within narrative inquiry. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) state that some benefits of narrative inquiry are as follows:

- Most people enjoy sharing stories, making it easier for data collection;
- When people attempt to hide the truth it, often becomes apparent during the data analysis stage;
- Narrative provides the appropriate avenue for gaining rich description and detailed data;
- Gaining deeper insight into participants' stories is made possible through follow-up data collection because of participants' willingness to reflect on prior conversations.

The authors then list possible challenges that may arise with the use of narrative inquiry.

They are as follows:

- A story told through an interview can become difficult to interpret and made into a story from the data;
- It can be difficult to decipher the different relationships in play; the narrative, the interpretation of the narrative, and the story being re-told;
- The interpretation of stories can become a complicated task if the participant does not agree with the account or would like to change the light in which she is being presented. The benefit of this is that through this negotiation often times comes a greater understanding of the woman's life and the complexity of her story;
- The process of data analysis and re-telling the narrative is a constant struggle throughout the process.

The most pertinent issue, brought up multiple times throughout the literature, is the role and power of the researcher (Chase, 2005; Jaime, 2005; Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). "The idea that researchers are narrators opens up a range of complex issues about voice, representation, and interpretive authority" (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Researchers must be aware of what types of stories they are collecting, what message they are transmitting, and how the message comes to fruition. For example, if a White researchers are studying people of color they must

make sure their dominant voice or perspective is not becoming central in the story. Similarly, researchers who belong to the same population they are studying must be aware of the impact and knowledge that comes with that membership while keeping in mind that each individual's life-path is unique and that the researcher can never be the expert on any particular group experience (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

Understandings of concepts such as credibility, validity or trustworthiness that are used to ensure rigour must be addressed with honesty in narrative inquiry. Thus, we must engage with the issue of ownership of interpretation, so there is a sense that what we are presenting is shared truths and shared value. Thus, people's norms and values, including our own, are always evident in the way data are presented and portrayed. (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p. 467)

Through the processes of keeping a field journal, conducting member checks, and employing an outside reader to critique analysis of the data, researchers can provide some insurance that their voice will not dominate and taint the participants' story (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormack Steinmetz, 1991; Jaime, 2005; Patton, 2002). This process is also known as triangulation (Patton, 2002). Triangulation is the manner in which researchers build credibility and trustworthiness through cross-checking their data through various avenues such as outside investigators, different sources, and theories (Ely et al., 1991). Thereby, researchers are able to provide corroborating evidence and further validate their findings (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, there are a few other strategies to combat the possible issues that may arise during narrative inquiry. In order to be able to analyze each story in a manner that stays true to each participant's voice yet fits into an overall analysis and larger narrative, the researcher can begin by writing biographies of each participant (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Biographical accounts allow the researcher to create a

space for the individual before she is placed into the larger narrative. Further, it provides clarity when struggling with deciphering the different relationships in play and the process of data analysis and re-telling the narrative. Finally, researchers can write in first person, by doing so they begin to position themselves in the research, make their voice distinct from the participants, provide clarity around their perspective versus the participants', and distinguish between interpretation and analysis of interpretations (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

Choosing narrative inquiry.

In the quest for a methodology, three methods were explored; heuristics, portraiture, and narrative inquiry. Heuristics (Moustakas, 1990) seemed to focus on the self and did not allow for the researcher and participants to collaborate. I did not want my life experience to become the main focus of the study (Jaime, 2005), while I am a part of the research, the research scope is much broader and diverse than just my story. Furthermore, while I recognize that I am a member of the group, I am a stranger in the lives of each woman I will interview. Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997) is a method that requires the researcher and the researched to reside on the same canvas (Chapman, 2005).

In portraiture, the voice of the researcher is everywhere: in the assumptions, preoccupations, and framework she brings to the inquiry; in the questions she asks; in the data she gathers; in the choice of stories she tells; in the language, cadence, and rhythm of her narrative...portraits reflect more about the artist than about the subject. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997, p. 85)

Portraiture did not resonate with my ultimate goal for this research. As I stated before, I am a member of the group but this is not a self-study, nor do I wish to take away from the

beauty of the individual and her story by painting my story within her story, allowing the colors to mix and losing the individual in the portrait.

Narrative inquiry became the balance for me for several reasons. The first being that I could incorporate as much, or as little, of my own experience and prevent a shadow from being cast over the other stories. The second reason is that narrative inquiry is a form of storytelling and the stories of Afghan women in their pursuit for higher education is one that has not been told. Furthermore, storytelling and oral histories are a part of Afghan culture (Smorti et al., 2007; Younos, 1998) which I will describe in more detail in the following section. Finally, as a feminist researcher, I view the use of narrative inquiry and the introducing of a new discourse into the dominant literature, as an act of social change. I will further discuss feminist research and empowerment through voice.

Oral Traditions

Stories are not only the way in which we come to ascribe significance to experiences...they are one of the primary means through which we constitute our very selves...We become who we are through telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell. (Sclater, 2003, p. 317)

Oral traditions or storytelling are a part of many cultures around the world (Jaime, 2005) including Afghan culture. Oral traditions are common among collectivist cultures (Smorti et al., 2007) which are cultures typically found in the East that focus on the “we” as opposed to the traditionally Western “I.” In other words, individualism versus collectivism is determined by the need for the individual versus the group (Entezar, 2007). Cultures or groups of people who are considered to be low power distance societies are typically individualistic whereas high power distance societies are often times collectivist (Entezar, 2007; Hofstede, 1980). Power distance is a dimension of

culture that refers to the relationship between powerful groups or authority figures and the less powerful groups within a society. In high power distance cultures, such as Afghan culture, there is an unequal distribution of power which, in turn, leads to the collectivist mindset and receiving protection and advancing through family bonds rather than government or the greater society (Entezar, 2007). Oral traditions can be traced back to cultures of ancient times; it is by no means a new phenomenon (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

In modern times, diaspora cultures maintain the use of oral traditions in order to convey and keep alive their culture among their children. The use of oral traditions is also a means of incorporating different cultures into the academic discourse (Jaime, 2005). Western researchers can learn a great deal “from the ways in which non-Westerners narrate the self, narrate group identities, or integrate folklore narratives into personal narratives” (Chase, 2005, p. 670). Narrative inquiry and its oral traditions link to the oral traditions of Afghan culture and when brought back in full circle become counter-narratives which can be introduced into academia, and change begins.

Counter-narratives are those stories which are not found in the grand narrative or the narrative of the dominant culture (Daya & Lau, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). When observing the stories that are included in the dominant discourse, power and privilege is often salient. “Storytelling...is always associated with the exercise, in one sense or another, of power, of control” (Hanne, 1994, p. 8 as cited in Daya & Lau, 2007, p. 5). Utilizing the introduction of a counter-narrative creates an environment in which we can begin to challenge the dominant Eurocentric ideology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001)

by bringing to light the meritocracy, color-blindness, and objectivity in our society. Narrative itself then becomes a political act by the introduction of marginalized voices and transformation of the individual through empowerment. Narratives have been used to challenge stereotypes and labels, debasing medical discourse, and to make visible historically marginalized people. In essence, we begin to use the power of language to change the language of power (Lau, 2007). Narrative inquiry becomes a political act on individual and collective levels (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Whooley, 2006).

Afghan women have largely been left out of the academic discourse and the introduction of our narrative is the opportunity to share our reality and educate society against the “racist discourse that constructs Asians as a homogenous group” (Lowe, 1996, p. 71). In a society where it is difficult to convince the oppressor to hear the oppressed, researchers can accomplish this through the presentation of the counter-narrative of Afghan women’s journeys towards doctoral programs, and we can then begin to reconstruct the lens from which the U.S. views Afghan women.

Feminist Research

Through the use of my own feminist lens, I hope to empower Afghan women by introducing their marginalized voices into the academy. Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) shows us that women’s lives are multi-faceted and feminist research helps to bring these intersecting identities together to explain the complexities of Afghan women’s lives. In addition, the traditions of storytelling in Afghan culture are also steadily becoming popular in feminist research (Fontana & Frey, 2000), ultimately bringing together feminist research and Afghan culture to tell an untold story. I believe that using a

feminist lens, and in turn incorporating my own lived experiences as a woman of color, allows me to understand other marginalized people because my life is parallel to my work (Aronson & Swanson, 1991).

Narrative inquiry employs interviewing as a means of collecting data and interviewing allows for the empowerment of women, a key factor when working with women of color. In the following excerpt, Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe empowerment through the use of interviewing and sharing personal narratives:

Feminist researchers have worked out a research methodology that is gentler and that humanizes both the researcher and the interviewee. Allowing people to “talk back” (hooks, 1989) gives voice through interviews to those who have been silenced; talking back becomes a political act. Feminist researchers argue that the interviewer and interviewee should try to build a relationship in which they share responsibility for finding the words and concepts in which ideas can be expressed and lives described, and by doing so emphasize the importance of issues in which women are deeply engaged. (p. 26)

hooks (2000) has shown that feminism is misunderstood as an anti-male movement when it is a movement to bring equality between genders by ending oppressions created by sexism. Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) states that

From the perspective of a feminist methodology, this situation [narrative inquiry] draws particular attention to the fact that, in women’s life stories, the social self does not merely occupy a place within the social order; rather, its place is overdetermined by the status of woman. This means that women’s life stories, unlike men’s, deal not only with the relation between the self and the social sphere, but also, and above all, with woman’s condition and with the collective representations of woman as they have been shaped by the society with which the woman being interviewed must deal. (p.78)

In the spirit of feminist research, the use of interviews is a method which brings greater depth and detail to the complexity of live of women of color (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). One of the complexities of researching women and women of color lies in the bridge between the public and private spheres of our lives (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, &

Miller, 2008). The ability to articulate this into the mainstream academic literature becomes powerful (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2008) in the lives of Afghan women as they claim a space in the academy. Through the use of interviewing and narrative inquiry many pieces come together to create this narrative. The importance of empowerment is seen in narrative inquiry, the use of interviews as data collection, feminism, and critical race feminism. All of the above tools become important in the feminist process of sharing Afghan women's journeys and creating a counter-narrative in the higher education discourse.

Methods

In the following section I provide details regarding participant selection, demographics of the population being studied, data collection methods, data analysis methods, construction of the narratives, role of the researcher, measures that have been taken to ensure trustworthiness, and limitations of the research.

Sample.

I was able to recruit six participants for the study and be a participant myself as a member of the community being researched. Women who ethnically identify as Afghan or Afghan-American have been included in the research. I worked with community members, colleagues and professors across the U.S. to distribute a study announcement describing my research. Colleagues and professors who were able to identify or currently know Afghan women, who are currently enrolled in doctoral programs, were asked to provide the women with the recruitment letter. The letter described the goal of my research and students were allowed to self-select to participate in the research. In

addition, my dissertation research was announced during the Dr. Younos show, a talk show on Afghan-Americans lives in the U.S., which airs on Noor TV, an Afghan satellite television channel. The above recruitment strategies yielded in four of the six participants and the remaining two were identified by another participant prior to the start of her interview.

The research participants for this study were identified through criterion sampling as well as snowball sampling. Patton (2002) defines criterion sampling as using a sample which meets predetermined characteristics. This particular sampling style was used because the population being studied are Afghan women who are currently enrolled in U.S. doctoral programs; all predetermined criteria. Respondents who contacted the researcher due to having received the study announcement (appendix A) were required to fit the predetermined criteria to be included in the study. The following criteria needed to be met in order to participate in the study: participants had to identify as female, participants had to identify as Afghan or Afghan-American, participants had to be currently enrolled in a doctoral program in the U.S., and participants had to be willing and able to partake in a series of two interviews. Snowball sampling, or the identification of potential participants through current participants (Patton, 2002), happened by chance when one of my participants asked if I needed more participants and then referred her acquaintances to me.

It is my belief and that of many qualitative researchers that the protection of research participants is of the utmost importance (Patton, 2002). Therefore, I chose to utilize pseudonyms to protect the identity of my participants. Additionally, the institution

name, program of study, and state the participant resides in are not disclosed to further protect their confidentiality. The women range from the ages of 21 to 42. They are enrolled in a variety of disciplines and are in various stages of their doctoral programs. One is beginning her doctoral courses as she moves through a joint masters/Ph.D. program, others are in their comprehensive exams, and a few are currently writing their dissertations. Some participants are married without children, others are married and have one or more children, and some are single. Most participants identify as Muslim and some practice the traditional Islamic head covering or hijab. An overview of general demographics are provided in the table below.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Religion	Language(s)	Year of arrival in U.S.	Phase in program
Ariana	35	Muslim	Farsi (Dari) & Uzbeki	1980	Dissertation
Suraya	37	Muslim	Farsi (Dari)	1985	Final/Internship year
Sakina	31	Muslim	Farsi (Dari)	1981	Pre-dissertation
Seffa	21	Muslim	Farsi (Dari)	U.S. born/family arrived in 1981	Course work (MA/PhD joint program)
Yasamine	42	Unknown	Farsi (Dari)	1976	Dissertation
Marwa	26	Muslim	Farsi (Dari) & Pashto	Canada 1990, US 2006	Course work/comprehensive exams
Bushra	30	Muslim	Farsi (Dari)	1981	Dissertation

When I first began looking for participants I was concerned that I would not be able to find enough individuals to conduct a study. I experienced a great deal of anxiety

before I even began my search, fortunately, I was embraced by a community of scholars who had never met me but supported my work. I began by reaching out to my colleagues in hopes that they could identify colleagues in other states who could assist me. Many of them replied to my email stating, “Yeah, I know an Afghan doctoral student. You.”

As time progressed, I had a few colleagues who reached out to their academic communities across the U.S., and before I knew it, my study proposal was being sent to thousands of academics via list-servs and communities such as mosques, Afghan professional networks, and Afghan student groups. I was also able to locate Afghan professors who attempted to help me locate participants. Within a week I had received dozens of e-mails identifying potential participants or people who may know how to reach participants. The most powerful e-mails were from people who could not identify any participants but thanked me for pursuing an “important” topic and asking me to send them my finished work.

I contacted six women and they all agreed to participate in my study, however, when I contacted them again to discuss a time to fly out and interview them only three replied to my message and agreed to an interview. Of the remaining three, one participant was busy with her studies and could no longer participate and the other two did not return my e-mails. I decided to begin travelling with only three interviews scheduled. By the time I reached my second destination I received a response from a new participant and was able to interview her that week. Her interview resulted in two additional participants and I had a total of seven participants, including myself. The process of finding participants was emotional, specifically when I was given

encouragement and support from complete strangers and when I realized I was not alone in this journey; there are more Afghan women in the academy.

Data collection.

Interviewing was utilized as the data collection method. The first interview ranged from one hour to a little more than two hours. All interviews were conducted at a public location of the participants' choice and were audiotaped. Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, such as coffee shops, restaurants, university meeting rooms, classrooms, and hotel lobbies. I traveled to the participants' city of residence and conducted the initial interview with the exception of one interview which was conducted via Skype. Prior to the start of the interview, the consent form (appendix B) was reviewed in detail. Obtaining consent is crucial to conducting ethical research and ongoing consent is a good practice to maintain throughout the interview process (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2008; Patton, 2002). Therefore, any clarification questions were answered at that point as well as throughout the interview, which created steady assurance, clarity, and ongoing consent.

During the initial interview, interviewees were asked a series of open-ended questions (appendix C) and given time to answer. Through the use of open-ended questions, interviewees were able to share a greater depth of information and provide a greater amount of data that gave way to rich description documented in the next chapter through their narratives (Ely et al., 1991; Patton, 2002). This initial series of questions followed a general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) states that when utilizing a general interview guide approach, researchers are able to outline and

explore specific issues in contrast to using an open-ended interview approach which will yield an unknown level of responses. Specifically, I aimed to find variables that have influenced the participants' choice to pursue a doctoral degree and ultimately have influenced their life story. I explored this through questions regarding their family history, their family's move to the U.S., their experience in education, and their views on culture, gender, and immigration. I approached the interview process knowing that each individual I interviewed is more complex than these variables, however, for the current research, these are the variables I explored and I have included other variables as they arose through the interviews. Finally, the initial interview was the crucial point in my research that allowed me to enter the participants' world, explore what their reality was, learn about that which was unobservable, and begin to gather and construct a story (Patton, 2002).

Following the initial interview, participants were e-mailed a copy of their transcripts and given time to review and make changes in order to conduct member checks as a means of triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002) and to ensure the accuracy of the interview transcriptions. Upon completion, a follow-up interview was conducted via e-mail. The intention of the second interview was to ask follow-up or probing questions, which are conducted after the interviewer has had a chance to review the initial transcripts, and to find if there were issues, themes, or concepts that were touched on but now needed to be explored in more detail to add to the richness of data (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition to adding to responses that may have been vague during the initial interview, follow-up questions ensure that information is as

detailed and thorough as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). It is worth noting that the primary difference between general interview questions and follow-up questions is that follow-up questions are not written down in the beginning of the research. Follow-up questions are formed through skillful listening, the ability to know what is said, and the ability to know that there is underlying and unexplored depth to an answer (Patton, 2002).

Analysis.

Traditional methods for analyzing narratives.

There are several approaches in analyzing narrative data. Among the methods of analysis are Labov and Waletzky's model of narrative analysis, Mischler's typology, and collocation analysis. Labov and Waletzky (1967) state that there are six components required to build a narrative. The components are as follows: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda. The presence of these components are said to make a narrative complete (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Mischler (1995) takes his model a step further and states that in addition to Labov and Waletzky's six components, there are core assumptions about narratives that can be applied to a complete a story. These core assumptions are position, coherence, and structure. Again, without these components, a narrative is not fully formed; therefore, the researcher scans his or her data for evidence of the assumptions or components (Mischler, 1995). Finally, collocation analysis is a method that states narratives should be "analyzed using more than one operation simultaneously so that they are collocated in operational formats and in relationship to each other" (Mello, 2002, p. 236). There are four operational formats used to analyze stories. They are textual, transactional, sociocultural, and educative.

Textual operation refers to plots structures, symbolism, and significance. Transactional operation refers to the relationship of the researcher and audience, meaning of the story, and physical context. Sociocultural operation refers to cultural interpretations and meanings. Educative operation refers to didactic information, pedagogy, curricula, frameworks, and rote memorization (Mello, 2002).

Methods for analysis.

I analyzed the interviews via a constant comparative method. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the constant comparative method was originally intended as an analysis process which would yield in theory formation. For the sake of this research, I used a constant comparative method as a “continuously developing process in which each stage provides guidance for the next throughout the inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 340). The initial step in analyzing was to read and re-read transcripts, then move into in-vivo coding. Coding allows qualitative researchers to combine, differentiate, and reflect on data through the creation of themes and patterns (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Through in-vivo coding, themes and patterns are created from the use of the participants’ words, or what is known as the local language (Saldana, 2009). The in-vivo codes were moved into open-codes which capture single words or phrases into larger codes that are representative of several in-vivo codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The open-codes were then analyzed and arranged into four major themes which are discussed in the next chapter.

Critiques of coding.

It is important to note that researchers who utilize the dominant methods for analyzing narrative data state that “coding is not narrative” (Mello, 2002, p. 234; Mishler, 1995). Mello (2002) states that researchers choose to code their data in order to follow standardized research analysis processes and thereby gain acceptance through presenting legitimate or institutionalized data. Even further, the process of coding is viewed as one that divides narratives in a manner that makes the story lose meaning and the individual voice to be lost in analysis. Interestingly enough, Shiro (1997) reports that Labov and Waletzky’s model of narrative analysis result in highlighting similarities among groups as opposed to unique characteristics. Furthermore, researchers risk changing the meaning of the story by attempting to fit the narrative into predetermined categories.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) have found that researchers are able to “narratively code” their data (p. 131). For example, researchers are able to record events, actions, interweaving storylines, continuities, and discontinuities throughout their field text in order to create a rich description along with their coded interview transcripts. In addition, by using the participants’ own words, the importance of voice and empowerment through the presentation of a counter-narrative is maintained. While Mishler (1995) states that “we do not find stories; we make stories” (p. 117), I argue that we are given stories and it is our duty to share them in an accurate manner that respects the lives of our participants.

I found it is possible to code the data without losing meaning or individual voice. First, by creating individual narratives, each participant is given a space and voice within the research. Next, the use of in-vivo coding to open codes to themes is a process that is

linear, allowing the researcher to move back and forth between original transcripts to themes, maintaining the original voice and storyline. Finally, the analysis of themes weaves in excerpts from the original interviews, creating a central narrative that shows similarities while maintaining space for the individual and unique voice of each participant.

Construction of the Narratives

The purpose of this dissertation research was to highlight the experiences of Afghan women as they traverse the educational system and enroll in doctoral programs. The study was guided by the primary research question: What factors influence Afghan women's journey to and experiences in doctoral programs? In addition, the following sub-question was employed to further explore the principal research question: How have their intersecting identities, both as Afghan and women, impacted their decision to pursue a doctoral degree?

The literature on women of color in higher education is gradually beginning to include women from South Asian countries. Nevertheless, within the literature on South Asian women a void still remains regarding research about Afghan women in higher education. Even further, Kaifi (2009) reports that there is still much misunderstanding about Afghan culture, Afghan people, and their views on education. Participants in the study feel this empty space as one stated, "I'm not just educating myself for me, it's for our community...let's get Afghans out there. Let's be published, let's bring awareness to who we are. We're educated too." This study provides the opportunity for seven Afghan

women to share the factors that have impacted their experiences on the way into and through doctoral programs.

The narratives were created from their individual transcribed interviews and my journal notes from our time spent together. Each interview was read with and without the voice recording. From here I rearranged their interview to fit a chronological story; from childhood to doctorate. I then shared their story as they shared it with me, including representative quotes to provide rich description and bring life to their stories. I discuss the construction of my narrative in greater detail below.

Role of the Researcher

The qualitative analyst owns and is reflective about her or his own voice and perspective, a credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness; complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the researcher's focus becomes balance—understanding and depicting the world *authentically* in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness. (Patton, 2002, p. 494)

In the spirit of true qualitative research I attempt here to provide a brief explanation of my voice, perspective, commonalities, and approaches to conducting trustworthy and authentic research. I believe that we live in an ever changing society that cannot deny the importance of diversity. Diverse students enter our universities yet very little is known about our vast student body. While we are making strides in educational research to better understand women of color, I think that we can reach greater heights by expanding our research. One of the examples of expanding our research is to take a pan-ethnic look at our students, therein lays an untouched resource. Within the Asian student population, the student body that has been only moderately studied (Younos, 1998; Yusuf, 2007) are Afghan students.

As an Afghan woman currently pursuing a doctorate, I was interested in the journeys of other Afghan women in the academy, how their journey was shaped by their life experiences, and the unique characteristics that drove them to pursue a doctorate. My educational journey has been shaped by being an immigrant to this country as a result of war, negotiating two cultures, being a woman of color, being Afghan, and being a member of a misunderstood ethnic and racial population.

With my personal background, my belief in the importance of diversity, my desire to create space in the academy through counter-stories, and empowerment through critical race feminist movements, I explore the lives of Afghan women in doctoral programs. I believe that through the use of a CRF framework I am able to provide space for all of the identities that intersect to create and complete these women's stories. In addition, through the use of narrative inquiry, I provide a detailed description of the factors that influence women on an individual level and within the larger narrative of their journey to the academy.

My personal narrative was written in an autoethnographic manner (Patton, 2002). I have pulled from my interview, which was conducted by my supervisor, using the same questions I used for my participants, and on previous reflections and autobiographies I have written through the course of my doctorate. Through the use of autoethnography, the researcher is able to study culture and oneself as a member of that culture (Patton, 2002). In other words,

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on the social and the cultural aspects of their personal

experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, retract, and resist cultural interpretations. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739)

The delicate balance of weaving in and out of one's work, both as researcher and participant, can be a vulnerable place for many social scientists. Scholars have shown that while it is a difficult task (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), it can be done well and adds an important voice in the literature (Das, 2009; Newman, 2009; Sharif, 2009). Newman (2009) used autoethnography and narratives to explore her relationship with her university and, as a result, reflect on the process of transformational learning. For Newman, autoethnography became a means of "honoring the significance of human spirit and the collective celebration of each person's unique life story" (p. 16). Additionally, she states that autoethnography allows the reader and the researcher to co-construct knowledge. Similarly, Das (2009) used autoethnography in her work to explore the experiences of going through an arranged marriage within Indian culture. She further explains that autoethnography has allowed her to

begin to comprehend how going through the process of an arranged marriage has made me confront this duality of individualism and collectivism that has always been within me and that has impacted my understanding of myself and my relation to everything and everybody around me. As a bicultural individual now, this duality within me has become even more potent and palpable and needs to be addressed. I need to understand the story (as expressed through my experiences of going through an arranged marriage) of how easily I have been able to 'fit in' to the demands and obligations of an Indian collective world even while I am exposed to and educated by a globalized way of living to ascertain my individuality. (p. 5)

Finally, Sharif (2009) used autoethnography to examine the discourse on Muslim Americans through her narrative as an African American Muslim woman; focusing on her racial, gender, sexual, and religious identities. Sharif explains that autoethnography

has given her the opportunity to increase awareness about an underrepresented population within the literature on American Islam, the voice of the African American Muslim woman.

As I stated earlier, narrative inquiry allowed me to claim a space within my research without overshadowing my participants' stories. Qualitative research honors the researcher's lived experience and tacit knowledge in the process of conducting research (Patton, 2002). As a member of the group I am studying, I have entered this process with tacit knowledge and that knowledge has been informed and broadened by hearing the stories of six other Afghan women on a similar path. Ah Nee-Benham (1997) describes this process when she states, "In retelling this...story, I have begun to explore my life experiences as a woman of color..." (p. 63). As part of the population and in order to provide one more perspective and journey, I have included myself as a participant in the research. As a member of a marginalized population, both as a researcher and student, I am able to create space in the academy for my counter-narrative (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) alongside my participants' stories.

Trustworthiness.

"Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means at the least that the processes of the research are carried out fairly, that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studied" (Ely et al., 1991, p.93). In order to establish trustworthiness I attempted to be transparent and reflective throughout my research. One way to ensure reflectivity and transparency is through the process of journaling (Jaime, 2005; Patton, 2002). Journaling is not an option in qualitative research; it is a

requirement (Creswell, 2007). Through the use of journaling, I captured the essence of the interviews before I left the interviewing environment. I was able to reflect on my own feelings and thoughts which were a reference during my analysis process, essentially, journal entries have become a form of triangulation and a check-point for ensuring that my voice is not dominating or clouding the data. Even further, journaling allows a space for my story in the research without taking away the focus from the participants (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Finally, journaling provides an additional source of data to assist in the deciphering of interview data, differing between the narrative, the interpretations of the narrative, and the re-telling of the story; all of which have been listed by Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) as possible challenges in narrative inquiry.

The process of journaling took place throughout the entire research process, including prior to, during, and following all interviews. Interviews were taped with a Sony ICD-UX71, noise reduction recorder to ensure high quality recordings for accurate transcriptions, which Creswell (2007) has found to be yet another factor for creating trustworthiness in research. When interviews are recorded clearly, transcriptions are more likely to be accurate, and data is reliable. Upon completion of transcription, I utilized yet another form of triangulation. I employed outside readers to critique my analysis (Patton, 2002). By doing so, I had three other individuals who were able to assist in clarifying interpretation from the participants actual story and to reduce researcher's bias. In addition to outside readers, the participants were able to read, reflect on, and change their own interview transcripts and individual narratives. This ensured

credibility of the data (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002) and provided each participant with the respect to change the manner in which she is being presented and, ultimately, increase my understanding of the complexity of her life (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

Finally, I created individual narratives of each participant. By doing so, I ensured that each participant has her own space within the research (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Individual narratives have allowed me to individualize each experience prior to weaving it into a larger narrative. Additionally, creating a story for each participant allowed me to have a reference point during the process of data analysis, telling, and re-telling stories for the purpose of building a larger narrative. This reference, or leg of triangulation, is crucial because it assisted me in the complicated task of analysis by compartmentalizing each story before it becomes complicated by the larger analysis.

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations in this research. The first limitation of my study is that I was not able to travel to conduct the second interview in person. This hindered my ability to pick up on external cues and body language, both which are valuable additions to the interview data (Patton, 2002). The second limitation in my study is in relation to journaling and observation. I had a limited time with participants and was not able to provide an extensive and detailed log of interactions; furthermore, it is difficult to capture all situations in a single visit and setting (Patton, 2002). The third and greatest limitation is my sample, both size and population. It is difficult to find Afghan women in doctoral programs and I am limited to a small sample size. Having a larger sample size would increase the likelihood of having participants from various

religious backgrounds and various tribal affiliations which would enrich the data. In terms of sample population, my study is limited to Afghan women in U.S. doctoral programs only. This excludes all other Afghan students, Afghan men, and international Afghan students. This brings me to my final limitation, the sample is not large enough in size or scope to allow for the findings to be generalized to other populations, including but not limited to, women, women of color, Afghan women, Afghan students, and Afghan men.

It is noteworthy to share that in qualitative research, issues of generalization take on different forms and meanings. One example of qualitative generalization is representational generalization. In representational generalization, the findings from one study can be found true in the larger population from which the participants have been drawn (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). As I have stated above, the findings cannot be generalized to the larger Afghan women population, there are findings that are represented in the lives of other Afghan women doctoral students.

Summary

Chapter three provided an overview of the methodology and methods of the study including the role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and limitations. Chapter four will introduce the narratives of each individual participant.

Chapter 4: Individual Narratives

This chapter introduces the individual narratives of the Sarafranz Seven. Sarafranz is a Farsi word meaning proud, honored, glorious, and illustrious. The Sarafranz Seven are the Afghan women doctoral students who have graciously contributed their time and told their stories to complete this study. These women have openly shared their life stories with me and provided me, through their eyes, a glimpse of what it means to be an educated Afghan woman. They have shared stories of how their families left a war torn Afghanistan; how they have managed to grow up in two different cultures; their educational experiences from elementary school to graduate school; and the layers of identities that they hold: mother, sister, doctoral student, daughter, educator, activist, wife, Muslim, 1.5 generation American, Afghan, U.S. born, Afghan-American, woman, and Afghan-Canadian-American as well as other identities that intersect (Andersen, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Wing, 2003) in their daily lives and impact their educational journeys. Again, the names used below, with the exception of my name, are pseudonyms.

The Sarafranz Seven

Ariana

“Learning and education will bring you a dish of food even in the jungle, so you don’t have to rely on anyone.”-Ariana’s father

Ariana was born to an Uzbek father from Jalalabad and an Uzbek mother from Kabul. Her grandfather was one of the first dentists in Jalalabad and her father followed his footsteps and attended dental school in Pakistan. While her paternal family was highly educated and from a higher socioeconomic class, her mother completed primary schooling through the sixth grade and came from a family that was considered to be of a lower socioeconomic class.

Her family left Afghanistan for personal family reasons shortly after she was born in 1976. They traveled to Saudi Arabia and were living in Riyadh when they got news of the communist coup and Soviet invasion. Her father knew they could not return home and his Saudi sponsorship had run out. Her family applied for tourist visas and traveled to the eastern United States and applied for asylum.

Ariana's father was unable to continue his career as a dentist and began working odd jobs so that he could feed his family and work his way back up to being a dentist. Ariana began her schooling in the same neighborhood she still resides in with her family. Her high school experience was full of a wide array of challenges as she recalls in her interview with me. She describes her school as a "typical inner city" school with "very, very wild kids." It was "not the best high school but I wasn't smart enough to get into those—the one's where you give the test...but I was creative." With her creative mind and her best friend at her side, she began to explore literature and poetry, on her own, outside of her classes. Despite being in a series of English as a second language (ESL) classes as a child, Ariana was able to self-educate and surpass her peers in high school and received encouragement and recognition from her teachers.

Her passion for learning and being cultured along with the undying support of her father, led her to pursue her bachelor's degree. She states, "with my schooling my dad was very supportive. My mother wasn't. My mother would prefer if I'd gotten married at seventeen." In her story she shares that the love and support her father gave her was steadfast in her journey to the highest level of education.

Ariana remained local while she pursued her bachelor's degree and her master's degree. She describes the experience as pleasant and full of support with some challenges related to her diaspora identity. For Ariana, it was not the fact that none of her family members had attended college in the U.S., but it was the questioning of her presence. She explains

What I didn't have was that sense of entitlement, and I think that makes a big difference in feeling like you are an authority in your work...what you have is, yeah, the inherent racism, it's that questioning, all of it is that questioning of authenticity and this wondering where you are authentic. You don't have a place...it's different even being a diaspora from a country that you can't ever go back to.

Ariana could not go back but she went forward. With strength, courage, determination, faith and her father's support she applied to a doctoral program in her city. Her father said to her, "don't stop...if you're gonna do it, do it all the way. I'll support you and I want you to finish. Do it all the way and get the best of this degree rather than settling with the least."

In her own words, Ariana's doctorate experience has been "the scariest, worst, nightmarist...Ph.D. experience of my life." Shortly after beginning an extremely cutthroat and competitive doctoral program, Ariana's life, as the lives of millions, was changed by the events of September eleventh (9/11). "Afghan, Afghan, Afghan,

everything became Afghanistan so by fall 2001 everything was Afghan.” Ariana felt the need to speak out against the poor treatment of Afghans and Muslims in the U.S. In doing so, she and her family received multiple death threats and the stress began to take a toll on her family. Her family went through a devastating transition which left her emotionally and financially crippled. In the midst of this desolation she met her first advisor, a South Asian woman. She began a relationship with her but chose to take some time off, straighten out her life, and help Afghanistan through various projects. When she returned to her program she realized that the woman whom she “idealized,” “admired,” and viewed as an “idol” would become one of the largest hurdles in her doctoral journey. Ariana’s advisor was not supportive of her writing and gave her no guidance on how to improve it. In the end, she was forced to discard her half-completed first dissertation. Additionally, she found out that her advisor was giving her poor recommendations for the fellowships to which she applied hoping to receive assistance with her education. She shared with me her pain, “I had all this debt...I wasn’t getting any fellowships, I wasn’t getting anything. And then she would act so terrible. So, after a while I couldn’t even write a sentence because I was so traumatized by her.”

She knew she would never get through the program in this manner and chose to leave her advisor. She recalls, “Obama got elected...and when he won the election I was like I need to change, it’s time for change. I wrote her an e-mail...I’ve decided that I don’t want to work with you anymore.” With the moral support of her friends and father, she sent the e-mail and found a new advisor. Even though her new advisor was at capacity for advisees, he recognized her dilemma and took her on as a student. She

smiles and states, “So, that’s that. But the new mentor is amazing. And it takes a White male to save me from this,” commenting on the irony of her situation. Ariana continues to work on her new dissertation today.

Suraya

“There is an African American saying that ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’ I definitely think that it has taken a village to help me reach my goal of completing my graduate work.”

Suraya began to share her journey with me in Farsi and then quickly changed to English, noting it would make it easier later. She was born in Afghanistan to a middle class family. She describes their lives as comfortable, pleasant, filled with extended family and being taken care of by her grandmother while her parents worked. Her happy life came to an end when the Russian invasion began. She recalls, “We saw other family members who were also taken away, tortured, never released and some were killed.” Luckily, her neighbors informed her father that they overheard he was next to be “picked up.” The changes in Afghanistan had resulted in strict laws against families leaving the country together.

They would never allow whole families to leave because they knew what that meant that the family is leaving Afghanistan. So they would always allow only one person from the family to leave. And it only could be to countries like India for medical treatment or Russia or Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage.

Suraya’s father had no choice but to leave his family behind and plan a trip to Mecca for pilgrimage as his escape from the country. Her mother used some savings to pay an escape guide to get her and her children to Pakistan, but he stole her money and did not help them escape. The second guide, however, was able to help her family leave

Afghanistan. She shares her story, recalling that she was worried about her mid-year, third grade exams and had no idea of her mother's plan for escape.

She didn't tell us what was going on. So that night she said we're leaving...we were told how to act on the way there. I think it was...12:00 midnight when, you know, a white Toyota truck pulled over, it had a cover, tarp cover on the back. So we got into the car and we noticed that there were already other people sitting in the back of the Toyota and you just kind of sat there quietly. My family left with one bag filled with an extra pair of clothes, a thermos of tea, a whole roat [sweet bread], few lemons, and tea cups. We left everything else behind.

Suraya and her siblings were young children when their mother courageously escaped with them over the mountains into Pakistan. She says,

The whole escape to us, like even talking to my brother and sister, like as a kid we saw it as a game. For us, it just felt like that because we were kind of being chased and you had to run and hide. But we knew that if you got caught it meant death...

Her father had gone from Saudi to Italy to Canada. Suraya's family stayed in Peshawar for a short time and got visas to go to Italy. When they arrived her father had already departed to Canada. After a few months, her mother was able to get her family to Canada where they were reunited as a family and lived for four years. In an attempt to join extended family in the western U.S., her family got visas and came to the U.S. They overstayed their visas and finally received their citizenship in 2001. She notes they were very nervous about receiving their citizenship due to the events of 9/11. Suraya's parents began working in hot food trucks to support the family. In the meantime, she and her siblings began their journey into the U.S. educational system. She recalls,

I have a very distinct memory that in the middle school when I came home with my report card, it had...three A's, two B's and a C. I showed this to my mom...she looks at it and she goes, we're here for you guys, we moved twice and our obligation is to put a roof over your head and put food on the table. Your obligation is to go to school and you bring me this.

From that moment, Suraya knew what the expectations were and she pushed herself to excel in her academics. She shares that this was difficult because her family expected her to go to college, but the American social capital, which she states helps individuals navigate the education system, was missing. She had financial support and moral support, but had to manage the system on her own. Her family wanted her to obtain a degree that would not take much time and provide a good income, but she was not interested in their idea of dental school. She started off at a local community college and began volunteering at hospitals. It was then that she felt that what she wanted to do and applied to a local university to complete her bachelor's degree. She shares that her professors and friends were paramount in helping her navigate through her undergraduate years. Additionally, her sister was "the biggest support" as she helped Suraya edit and type her handwritten essays.

After graduating with her bachelor's degree, Suraya did not feel she knew exactly what she wanted to do, so she worked in a professor's lab for several years. It was this work and the information that "supportive graduate students" provided her that led her to choose her current path. As she now nears the end of her program, she shares that her doctoral journey has had a fair share of challenges.

As Suraya has pursued her doctoral degree, she has been met with challenges that have also been blessings: marriage to a very supportive man, the birth of a child, and supportive mother-in-law who resides with her. While her husband and mother-in-law help to take care of their home and their son, Suraya still feels the stress of being pulled towards her studies and her family life. She lovingly states:

He has been supportive throughout my graduate school by buying me a laptop and making a quiet office space in the backyard. While collecting data for my dissertation, he would help me collate packets and enter data for me...he has helped take care of our son during the day...he took his own college classes in the evening. My mother-in-law helps prepare all of the meals...my parents and sister have provided encouragement but my husband and mother-in-law have been in the front lines providing the actual support to make it possible for me to complete my graduate degree.

In addition to familial challenges, Suraya has been faced with the challenges of having imposter syndrome as a woman of color. Imposter syndrome disables students of color from being able to internalize their accomplishments (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Rypsi, Malcolm, & Kim, 2009). Often students feel they are undeserving of their success just as Suraya shared with me,

On average a good many ethnic minority students, especially if you're coming from poor ethnic backgrounds, have this kind of imposter syndrome. You kind of question how you got there. Is it really you, did you get there because you really got there out of your own efforts, or did you get there because you're an ethnic minority and got special whatever.

Despite her struggles, Suraya has been able to move forward and is near the end of her program. She notes that this has been made possible through her family and the financial institutional support given to graduate students who are mothers.

Sakina

“The idea that...Afghanistan is a poverty-stricken country is very strong in my head. Every moment I think of the idea that I am a woman that was given this opportunity. So it affects the night before my exams where I want to give up and not study and my dissertation...it affects all of that. Because all of this is something, a dream that somebody else doesn't have.”

Sakina was born in Afghanistan a few years prior to the Russian invasion. Her father had a lucrative career and her mother worked as well. She describes her family life as middle-class, happy, and stable. Family was the central focus of their lives and Sakina

was surrounded by grandparents, aunts, and uncles from her paternal and maternal families. Their pleasant lives changed when their family needed to leave Afghanistan to save her father's life. They faked an illness and left for India to get "treatment" for her mother. Shortly after, her uncle sponsored her family to come to the U.S. She has lived and received all of her education in the western U.S. since their arrival.

Sakina shares the story of an educational journey that has been mostly pleasant and full of support. Her parents both value education and have always sought out ways to improve the quality of their children's education. Her older brother was able to locate a magnet high school for them to attend. The benefit of the magnet high school was that Sakina had counselors preparing students for college beginning their freshman year.

Additionally, she shares that she had always considered education to be a natural thing,

I was just very, very, um, academically inclined, so there was no way I wasn't gonna go to college. It was just something natural for me. I was the one in high school who never wanted to get married. I never wanted to have kids because I was gonna go and pursue my doctoral degree.

Her personal passion combined with her familial support led Sakina to pursue a bachelor's degree. During her bachelor's program she went through a personal, spiritual transition where she began to identify more with her religion, Islam, and she began to wear hijab. After her bachelor's degree, she got married and had her first child. Then the events of 9/11 started a spiral of events that led her to pursue her master's and doctorate through a joint program. The events of 9/11 created an influx of Afghan widows and their children being brought to the U.S. and Sakina volunteered to help a family settle in their new home. She describes her moving experience,

I kind of adopted this little family who was a woman, a widow with five kids and I started like helping them out. I was at their house every day, setting up their

home, enrolled them in school, tutoring. And their stories and their experiences of Afghanistan...changed my life around. It was like; oh my God...I need to do more in the world.

As she embarks on her doctoral journey, she finds that she has the emotional encouragement and support of her family and husband. She also has the understanding and flexibility of her professors since they knew she has children. She describes her advisor as being “awesome” and understanding the importance of family. Her advisor has also been an advocate and support in her receiving national recognition and scholarships. Despite the support, Sakina struggles with her intersecting identities in graduate school. She shares her dilemma,

So, my life is very unique in that, you know, I have this role as mother and a wife and a daughter-in-law and sister and all of these things enmeshed with my doctoral experience so I can't separate it, but it was challenging in that balancing act of how to balance all the different roles.

In her attempt to balance her roles, Sakina states that gender, womanhood, and motherhood are important and should be valued. She has found that through her journey many women are pursuing education in careers to equate themselves to men and she believes women should maintain and appreciate their gender which was given to them “by God.” In her graduate journey she has observed that,

I don't know if it's western or Afghan, but as minority women we struggle with accepting this gray area more, because we think that if you're a stay-at-home or traditional then you're not educated. You're oppressed. So, in order to not be oppressed, we need to be full-fledged career women and have our kids with babysitters. You know, so there's like these two polar extremes.

She continues her doctoral work to date and notes the importance of shedding positive light on Afghans and Muslim women throughout education. She states that her

Muslim identity has, “empowered [her] to wear the scarf and be identified so that [she] can erase that image of the oppressed Muslim or Afghan woman.”

Marwa

“It [Muslim Student Association] helped me become almost like a student leader...which I don’t think I would have done if I was not from a diaspora background because I kind of felt like I’m underprivileged and so I need to make my voice heard.”

Marwa is the daughter of two Afghan physicians. She remembers very little of their life in Afghanistan but states, “it was fun, except for the rocket blasts, you know, later times, of course, when you’re scared for your life.” Before the rocket blasts, Marwa had a happy family life in Kabul. She recalls family trips, spending time with extended family, and being cared for by her grandparents while her parents were working at the hospital.

Her family left Afghanistan so her mother could seek medical attention in India and while they were gone her grandparents informed them that the communists had taken over and their return could be dangerous. After staying in India they shifted to Pakistan where her grandparents escaped too and together, as a family, they immigrated to Canada. Marwa was raised in Canada and moved to the U.S. by way of marriage in 2006.

Her schooling through her bachelor’s degree was done in Canada. She describes the experiences as extremely difficult,

I was the oldest so I didn’t really have too much help. It was, you know, it was me kind of navigating it all on my own. So basically it wasn’t easy, it worked against me. I had to figure everything out on my own and my parents...obviously they were pushing me for higher education.

She had no assistance in preparing for college. Her transition from high school became even more difficult when she, against her parents' wishes, chose to move to another city to pursue her bachelor's degree. Although she ended up moving back home to complete her program of study, she shares that her experience in college was beneficial for several reasons. Prior to going away to college, Marwa did not find her culture or religion to be an important part of her identity. She recalls,

Before I moved away, my culture, none of those things, were really important to me, I just wanted to be as Canadian as, you know, Safaid [White], as possible, like getting away from, you know, like the Afghan culture. But when I moved away I realized how important my family, my culture and specifically my religion was to me.

As she reconnected with her religion, she found support in her religious community more than anywhere else. She shared that her parents tried to help but their lack of understanding would often frustrate her even further. Additionally, her friends were not Afghan and she felt that since they were White, they did not understand her problems and no support was found in those relationships either. She felt that that void was being filled by her religion and, as she neared her second year in college, she began wearing hijab.

Marwa continued through her bachelor's program knowing that she would not stop there. She states that education was engrained in her and it was not a question of if she would continue her education, but what her focus would be in graduate school. She also found inspiration in her parents' actions as she watched them go through their education again so that they could be physicians in Canada,

Even though they were both physicians...they started off, like my dad had to... you know deliver pizzas, my mom had to...wash floors, and then they both ended

up going to school and just watching them go through this transition...it was a big deal for them...and they studied for so long.

In the midst of finishing her bachelor's degree and disagreeing with her parents' wishes for her to attend medical school, Marwa met her husband and got married. Her marriage moved her to the western U.S. and then the eastern U.S. where her husband started his career as a lawyer. She shared that her husband and parents had stipulations to her marriage,

You have to get your doctorate, which is atypical of an Afghan man...and atypical of Afghan parents really because Afghan parents would normally want you to go and have babies, start your life...my husband was like I want an educated wife, I don't want someone to make me mantoo [Afghan dumplings] all day...I want someone who's gonna, you know, have education and have her own passions and desires.

Marwa was not sure which discipline she wanted to study for her doctorate and applied to the same field as her bachelor's degree, even though she felt she would not be happy in that area of study. After brainstorming with her sister-in-law, she began to explore the field in which she is currently enrolled. She started her master's/doctorate joint program in the western U.S. and transferred to a program in the eastern U.S.

Her biggest challenge in her doctoral journey has been finding time to balance her roles, or identities, as a wife, woman, and the desire to be a mother. She shares that she has definitions of duties that are only for herself and not reflective of any other identity, the main one being having time for her husband both emotionally and physically. Her rigorous program does not allow for much relationship nurturing. She also shares that they both want children but that she cannot imagine that while going through a doctorate program. She responds to her husband lovingly when things become challenging, "I always tell him, you wanted an educated wife."

Unlike the other participants, Marwa is fortunate enough to have an Afghan professor. She shares how this woman has made her doctoral journey a wonderful experience.

I have an Afghan professor actually. Yeah, so it's really good...she's really awesome. She's like my mentor. She helps me with everything. I go to her all the time. She's really awesome...She's amazing, you know. She's helped me through so much and she actually helped me apply for a fellowship...which I just got.

Marwa continues to excel in her doctoral program with the support of her husband, her husband's family, her family, her Afghan professor, and most importantly, her faith.

Yasmin

"I've learned that...education...doesn't just teach you what you know, it teaches you what you don't know."

Yasmin was born in Afghanistan to an Afghan father and an Irish, German, English mother. She has sweet memories of playing with her cousins, attending family events and activities, living with her grandmother, and visiting her mother's family in the U.S. Her parents met in college in the U.S. and her mother moved to Afghanistan to be with her father. Yasmin vividly recalls when life in Afghanistan began to change,

I remember one day, in June, I woke up and there was a tank parked in front of our house, basically pointing at the house...my dad went downstairs, talked to the men, said, you know, they want to take my dad away and he said, no, not in front of my family, let me get my family out of here.

Amidst the chaos, Yasmin's father was able to escape to India with her cousin and she went to Paris with her mother and younger brother. They then travelled to India to join her father and wait for the Soviet invasion to pass. The situation in Afghanistan seemed to worsen over time so Yasmin's family decided to travel to the U.S. to wait for things to calm down. The war in Afghanistan did not end and her family, with financial

challenges, began to build their life in America, starting in the mid-west and settling in the south-west where they still reside and have built successful lives and careers.

Yasmin's early education was impacted by the fact that she did not speak English. Although her mother is American, she learned how to speak Farsi and did so with her children. In her impeccable English she shares her experience,

...Pashto is my first language. So, I learned Pashto, then Farsi, Italian, German, French. I didn't learn English until I was almost eight and a half, nine years old. So, it impacted me quite a bit because I really had to struggle to learn the language, the culture...I probably didn't feel confident with my English speaking ability, or writing ability...until I was through with college.

For Yasmin, there were never any doubts of going to college; it was a matter of where she would go. Her parents encouraged her to go to Europe for her bachelor's degree but her close relationship with her family caused her to stay in state. She recalls coming home frequently and her parents "were so excited" to see her go off to college. Her parents fully supported her transition from high school to college,

The support I received was complete support. My parents supported me financially, emotionally...I mean when I graduated from high school my parents bought me a car...they got me an apartment right by the school and I had an allowance. My parents are very unusual though...they wanted me to go out and experience life.

Luckily, her parents were supportive because she did not receive support from any of her school officials. In fact, one of her high school counselors recommended she become a "stewardess" instead of attending college.

During college she met her husband and married him after her bachelor's degree was completed. They had children and with her support, he continued his education. Through some personal and career life changes, Yasmin decided to pursue her master's

degree which she completed in one year. After that program she thought, “If I can do that I can do my doctorate,” and she continued her education.

She describes her journey in graduate school as smooth. “I didn’t have any challenges in graduate school, um, other than finding time. Um, I thought graduate school was pretty smooth sailing for me.” Even now her greatest struggle is finding time to manage her work as a student, mother, and career woman.

Yasmin has found that her drive for education comes from her family and her personal beliefs. She shares how her family has influenced her beliefs of education,

...I think education is just important in my family...and consequently it’s become important to me. I mean I could have stopped at a bachelor’s and gotten a job and been fine. But it was that quest for knowledge, and that quest for bettering myself and being a more, um, a richer individual in, in what I can give back to society as well as my family.

She is now in her dissertation writing phase and continues to negotiate her priorities in order to be able to meet her duties as a mother, daughter, academic, and in her career.

Seffa

“...you talk more in class as you express your opinions more...you talk with students...you have some kind of relationship with them whether it’s friendships or just classmates, just so they know that behind the face there’s a real person.”

Born to Afghan immigrant parents in the western United States, Seffa considers herself no less Afghan than her Afghan-born siblings. Knowledge of her family’s life in Afghanistan has been passed on to her through stories from her parents. She shares that they “had a pretty good life.” Her maternal grandfather was a butcher in Kabul and her paternal grandfather was in the importing and exporting business. Her parents were also educated and had successful careers. They lived a happy, middle-class, Afghan life.

During the Russian invasion, her family left for safety reasons and traveled to India, claiming they were leaving for medical treatment. From there, her family in the U.S. sponsored her parents to move to the western U.S.; where she was born and currently resides.

Seffa shares that college was not a question in her family, “you knew you were gonna go to college.” In her educational journey, she has had the unwavering support of her parents and older siblings. During her elementary school education, she states that she enjoyed sharing her Afghan culture with her classmates; teaching them about the culture and sharing Afghan food with her classmates. Just a few years later, in middle school, the events of 9/11 changed her experience. She recalls that time,

It was different because all the sudden, before no one knew where Afghanistan was, and now, all the sudden everyone’s like, wait aren’t you from that place? I mean I was called like a terrorist by kids and stuff, but it wasn’t very, it was more confusion for them too because in elementary school I talked about Afghanistan...I remember this kid came up to me and he’s like, wait, so does that make you a terrorist?...you face little challenges every day.

The high school she attended was considered a middle college where students take college courses simultaneously with their high school courses, leaving them with only two years of undergraduate education to complete after high school. Seffa says the “transition for me between high school and college was very simple, because it was like I was attending college since ninth grade.” Her family decided to move to another city in the same state and Seffa tested out of the eleventh grade and began courses at the local community college in her new home. After two semesters she transferred to a local university where she completed her bachelor’s degree in two years. During those two

years, she decided to begin wearing hijab. She shares that, “it was a very simple transition because there was a large Muslim population on campus.”

Seffa shares that her middle college high school helped with her undergraduate journey but that her real support came from her family.

There was a lot of support. I mean I’m the youngest of four and all my siblings, um, were either in college or had completed college at that time, so besides my parents I feel like I have three other parents that I could go to, so when it was about college applications and what classes to take. So they definitely made the process easier for me...especially my brother who’s five years older than me. He’s the one right before me. Me and him were living at home at the time so he was basically a big, huge part of my support system.

The next step for Seffa was graduate school. Her parents always told her, “get educated to the highest level that you can,” and she had every intention. She wanted to be a medical doctor until she crossed paths with a professor and learned more about her profession. She found that she could still be a doctor and have a career in something that would allow her to have a family one day, an important future aspiration. She applied to a master’s/doctorate joint program and began her journey to the doctorate.

She found that graduate school was more challenging than her undergraduate years because she was the only Muslim woman in her cohort. She describes her struggles,

... it is more challenging, even now because they look at you and they expect you, you know, the stereotypes or when something comes up in the media or even in class discussions they turn to you and they expect you to be...the scholar from whatever you’re, you know, whatever you practice you should know...it’s kind of like you have to defend, it’s not just you you’re defending for, it’s kind of like this whole background that you’re defending.

Seffa found that she had to encounter stereotypical beliefs from classmates but from professors as well. Fortunately, she has found that even though there are struggles, there

are also supportive individuals on her campus. She shares how her campus attempts to be inclusive,

...our campus they...thrive on being a center for multiculturalism, so they, at least the professors and things like that in every class they try to include some type of multiculturalism in the curriculum...the professors at least appear to be open to your input...even with like dissertation topics and research topics when you present on your family or your culture...they're very open and...they invite that basically.

With her faith, familial support, and personal drive, Seffa has reached the second year of her coursework in her journey.

Bushra

"I didn't think you would make it here. I was certain someone would get in your way and stop you from completing. I thank God everyday that your advisor is a man of color and that he helped you arrive here."-my father

I was born in Kabul to an upper-class mother and a middle-class father. My mother came from a wealthy family with a father who imported Japanese motorcycles and tires to Afghanistan. My paternal grandfather came from a poor family, had no education and worked his way up in society. He had a sixth-grade education and eventually became president of a textile company. My paternal grandmother was a teacher. My parents describe their lives in Afghanistan as difficult at the beginning of their marriage but peaceful and fruitful before the Russian invasion. My father was a pharmacist and my mother was a teacher.

Just as many of my participants, my family too left Afghanistan because of the Russian invasion. We left before I was one-year old and lived in Pakistan for a short time. My father worked as a pharmacist for the Saudi Red Cross. The Red Cross would not let my father leave but he told them my mother had been diagnosed with cancer

(luckily it was a misdiagnosis) and we had to seek treatment in the U.S. We came to Colorado because some of our extended family members had already moved here.

My formal schooling began in the first grade when my father, with his broken English, demanded that the school let me skip kindergarten. We were not familiar with the U.S. school system; therefore, we were not aware that kindergarten was required. From a very young age, I was aware that my journey would present a unique set of challenges. As I moved through middle school, high school, and undergraduate courses, I found it increasingly difficult to see myself in the readings, the classroom, or the professors. I felt isolated and unsupported. Fortunately, I always had the support of my parents and their encouragement to pursue a higher education.

I tested out of my junior year of high school and began attending a local community college. From there I transferred to a four year university in Denver. During my undergraduate years, one of my biggest challenges was navigating the system and applying to graduate school. Although I originally began school wanting to become a medical doctor, I changed my mind and was going to pursue a doctoral degree in psychology. My guidance counselor misinformed me about the application process and I was unable to attend graduate school for two years.

During my undergraduate education the most impactful and difficult event was 9/11. Similar to many of my participants, I went through the anxiety, concern, and fear over people knowing of my cherished identity, being Afghan. Realizing there were no support systems on my campus for students like me, I sought refuge at home with my family.

My experiences working in the mental health field derailed me from wanting to pursue a doctorate in psychology and I began searching for something else. Through conversations with my cousin, I decided to explore higher education and apply to some local programs for information. I was invited to an open house at the University of Denver (DU) and offered the opportunity to apply to an assistantship. My graduate experience has been filled with challenges, mostly within the classroom and during my first assistantship. It was in my graduate courses that I felt encouraged and empowered to begin using my voice and for the first time, post 9/11, that I felt the courage to share my identity as an Afghan woman. Of course, this came with a set of challenges such as having to educate my peers on diversity issues, issues faced by women of color, and my own Afghan-American identity. Although certain experiences took their toll on my soul, I decided there was more to learn and more to teach, therefore, I continued on to the doctoral program at DU. With my various support networks, I have had a successful academic career here and have grown as a person.

In addition to my family's support, I have reached this stage in my education because of the support I had in my social network and, of course, my cousin. The financial support I received at the institution has been a large stress relief. The support of my supervisor, colleagues, and select professors has been encouraging along every step of my journey. Finally, my advisor has been the biggest advocate and supporter of my education on this campus. It is clear from Ariana's journey that not everyone is so fortunate with advisors. I too, just like my father, am grateful to have such a man as an advisor. His gentle nudging gave me the courage to take on the important task of

researching Afghan women in education and led me to meet the Sarafraz Afghan women scholars.

Summary

In chapter four I shared the narratives of the Sarafraz Seven. In chapter five I will discuss the four themes that have emerged from the narratives and the sub-themes within each category. I will also provide a summary of the themes through a conceptual model.

Chapter 5: Themes

Emerging Themes

Through the individual narratives of the Sarafraz Seven, four major themes have been found. These four themes represent a grand narrative of the factors that affect Afghan women as they pursue doctoral degrees. The four themes that emerged are *hoiyat* (identity), *iman* (faith), *sarmaye* (capital), and *faamilee* (family). I will begin by defining each of the main themes and each sub-theme will be introduced by a vignette, composed of all the participants' voices. Next, the sub-themes will be described and include pieces of the participants' narratives to show the instances in which their journeys were similar and where they differed. Finally, I will represent the themes through a conceptual model.

Hoiyat (Identity).

The state of being oneself or itself, and not another; character or condition defining who a person is. (Hawker, 2002)

The participants in this study have a shared identity as well as an individual identity. As most women of color, we are not able to simply choose from one identity and, in fact, our lives are a constant negotiation of the multiple intersections of different identities (Wing, 2003) that make us Afghan women. Moreover, identities are not a two-dimensional construct which can easily be defined, observed, or understood. Therefore, for the women in this group I will proceed to discuss how identity has influenced their journey to the doctorate through several sub-themes. The sub-themes that have emerged

in relation to identity are: diversity within the group, cultural influence on gender identity, identity-based needs, identity-based discrimination, and recognizing privilege. I will now explore each sub-category in depth.

Diversity within the group.

*I am
Afghan
American
Asian
Muslim
Afghan-American
Part-time Afghan
South-Asian
Woman of color
Irish, English, German
Afghan, Canadian, American
Muslim, Afghan woman living in America*

When I asked the women how they identified culturally, ethnically and/or racially, I received a wide variety of answers including Afghan, Afghan-American, constant learning-changing being, Muslim-Afghan woman living in America, Afghan-Irish-English-German, and Afghan-Canadian-American. Interestingly, each woman's sense of identity was derived from their own personal journey from Afghanistan and how they experienced their new lives, or in the case of Seffa, her family's immigration to the U.S. and her sense of identity as a U.S. born Afghan. She explains,

Although I was born and raised in the US and am very American, I feel that I am first an Afghan and then American. At home when I am with my parents/family I am surrounded by my Afghan heritage and embrace my differences. Since, as a child, the first school of thought is what you are presented with in the home, my Afghan identity is what I was surrounded by. Even so, my parents and older siblings provided me with a balanced amount of both the Afghan culture as well as the American culture. As a child I was taught both Farsi and English as well as enjoyed both American and Afghan customs. Yet when I am in a professional setting (or writing a paper) I tend to refer to myself as an Afghan-American

because I want to pay respect to the only land I have known to be a home for myself. I embrace and am very thankful for all the good America has offered me and my family. As I grow older, I have found that I have developed a culture within a culture. When I get together with my siblings/cousins I find that somehow we all embrace our Afghan heritage, despite being American. We love the Afghan food, music, customs and rituals. What is quite funny is that my siblings and cousins, who were born in Afghanistan, yet came to the US when they were very young, always joke around with those of my cousins and I who were born in America, saying that we are "more Afghan" and traditional than they are. So although I may refer to myself as an Afghan-American, I don't believe that connotes that I am any less Afghan than anyone else. Also, referring to myself as an Afghan-American allows others to see even though I may appear to be different or "foreign," I am in fact just as American as they are.

Other participants shared the complexities of their intersecting identities as well.

For some their religious identity was equally important as their Afghan identity, as we learn from Sakina when she states, "I feel both parts in me are very strong." Yet, for others, such as Suraya, the feeling is that she never really assimilated, therefore, she is a "Muslim-Afghan woman living in America." Yasmin's bi-racial identity has left her feeling like a "part-time Afghan" because she does not identify with only one culture.

The participants' varying forms of Afghan identity also influence their views on Afghan culture. Many stated that there were good and bad things to note when discussing our culture, yet others stated that there was no one phrase or sentence that could truly capture its depth and diversity. Additionally, understanding of culture comes from different knowledge bases as Ariana notes,

I don't know if I could describe it as accurately...I didn't really grow up in that community...what that did was it allowed us to have a better, maybe like very father-centered idea of what Afghanistan is...for a long time Afghanistan was my father because I didn't have any relationship to it, not connection to it, but only through the memories, stories...

Other participants, including myself, were able to identify positive aspects of the culture, negative aspects of the culture, and even aspects that are beginning to shift towards

gender equality, which will be discussed shortly. One unifying message when discussing Afghan culture is that each participant found beauty and pride in their culture. Marwa shares her thoughts,

...there's parts of the culture where the hospitality is just, I love that. I mean there's no other culture that has that... now especially that I've moved away from home and I've been interacting with lots of people from different cultures and nobody has our food, nobody has our culture, nobody has the maymaan nawaazee [hospitality] that we have, you know.

Although most of the participants were born in Afghanistan, the reader is able to see diversity within their lives in Afghanistan, journey to the U.S. and in their understanding of Afghan culture. Diversity within the group is noteworthy for many reasons. One of those factors is that we must realize the layers within identities and their impact on the participants. As I continue to provide this grand narrative through the explanation of themes, the reader must note that we are not a homogenous population, but we do share a variety of similar experiences.

Cultural influence on gender identity.

Woman

Wife

Educated

Divorced

Mother

Sister

Unmarried

Had certain rules

I'm just a [city] girl

The money and the culture

Decided where I was going to school

Although the participants' personal lives did not reflect what is known as stereotypical gender roles in Afghan culture, all of them were familiar with traditional

Afghan gender expectations. I have found through the interviews that as time progressed, so have Afghan gender roles. Yasmin explains it best when she shares,

Culture and gender define who we are as individuals. It is through culture and gender identification that we as individuals decide if we will wear pants or dresses, long hair or short hair, wear make-up or no make-up, play with dolls or trucks, etc. Our culture and gender combined determine our expectations of ourselves as well as expectations of others toward us and ultimately determine our behavior within a group. Gender roles are clearly defined in many cultures, including the Afghan culture. However, culture and gender expectations have potential to change over time, therefore, providing an opportunity to blur culture and gender lines more rapidly as cultures blend.

Participants unanimously shared that gender roles in traditional Afghan culture dictate that the man is the provider and the woman is the caretaker, who generally stays at home with the children. Aside from household roles, Ariana, Suraya, and I have found that there were distinct differences in the treatment of boys and girls and men and women. Ariana refers to them as “restrictions.” One of these restrictions we found was in regards to marriage. Suraya shares her challenges,

I think they [parents] still want that ideal piece of the good Afghan woman of being a good mother... hospitality... dinners and everything and having kids, but then on top of it figure out how you're gonna do school and work at the same time. So there was definitely different roles and expectations in that way... it wasn't, for my brother, so when are you getting married, so when are you getting married, so when are you getting married... it was like... you're gonna get married when you get married. For us it's like, okay, the time is clicking, let's go, let's go.

Simply put Ariana states that for most Afghans, “You get married, you can get educated as long as it doesn't interfere with marriage...”

Refreshingly enough, all participants shared that this was not the case in their lives. Some shared that their parents have equal roles in their households and that those equal gender values were passed on to them and their siblings. Sakina shares her

experience growing up in a household that valued faith as well as equality among both genders,

...when we learned more about faith I think those, um, stereotypical cultural values, some of them we left...you know, preferential treatment of boys versus girls. I think I was pushed with my academics just as highly as my brothers were...

Other participants shared that their equal household upbringing has also been manifested within their marriages with their husbands taking an equal and active part in household duties and child-rearing.

Examples of parents role-modeling and practicing gender equality in addition to having gender equality within the marriage, has shown to be an evolving identity that is creating bridges for Afghan women to be successful in their educational journeys.

Gender equality is not something that has always existed within Afghan culture, however, the participants of this study have shared that through time and education, gender norms are slowly changing among some Afghans.

Identity-based needs.

*I'm gonna figure it out
I'm a planner
I just went
My school prepared us
I took the SATs
I made sure my grades were decent
Asking for help
Volunteering
I should have prepared better
I couldn't afford it
There was no preparation
Very, very difficult*

When exploring Afghan identity and receiving support in graduate school, not all participants felt that this was an identity that was strongly in need of receiving campus

support. Other participants mentioned receiving support as a woman or a woman of color, but not specifically as an Afghan, although one participant has the support of an Afghan professor.

There were two participants that shared they did not seek out support as Afghan women. For Yasmin the answer was simple, "...you know I've never sought out support as a minority, ever. I just figure if I couldn't do it like everyone else, I can't do it." The reasoning for Suraya was a bit different. She explains her situation,

... I think that's because, you know, I came in as any other student. And I just happen to be an Afghan woman. And my cohort or people didn't really make a big deal out of that... that's sometimes nice. And I was just another student...

Suraya goes on to share that she did receive support as a female student, when she had her child, through a scholarship that supports new mothers in graduate programs.

For most of the other participants, including myself, we found that there was support available as a woman of color but not specifically as an Afghan student. Some examples that were brought forth were multicultural campuses, campus structures that were working towards inclusivity, diverse curricula, and the moral support to research our own populations. In my situation, I have received full support to embark on the journey of researching Afghan women for my dissertation work. Sakina notes having the assistance of her advisor in applying for and receiving a fellowship that supports students of color to research their own populations. The most unusual and exciting story was that of Marwa having an Afghan professor, which I detailed in her personal narrative. This was particularly unique because no other participant had this experience and many have noted that it is difficult to find Afghan professors in the academy. Marwa expressed a sense of relief and excitement when she shared that she had an Afghan professor. It was

almost as if she had a familial type of support within the academy that no other participant has found within their own ethnic group.

Identity-based discrimination.

Soviet Invasion
Running, running, running
Tank outside
It was horrible
White Toyota truck
Death threats
Where am I gonna live?
He was just so worried
Hates, you know, Muslims
You're alone at night
You're openly a Muslim
After 9/11
My whole life changed
Everything became Afghanistan
Before no one knew
Now all the sudden
Aren't you from that place?
Does that make you a terrorist?

From various cities in Afghanistan to the doctoral degree, Afghan women have survived an overwhelming amount of challenges due to their multiple identities. In the personal narratives, I shared with the reader the devastation of one war on the entire Afghan population, including the families of my participants and the participants themselves. Some participants were old enough to remember rocket blasts, tanks moving through the city, crying, devastation, fear, and the dangerous journey out of the country. As Afghans we have lost our country.

Moving forward, many participants recall seeing their parents struggle to rebuild their lives in a country where many of them did not speak the language. Countless numbers of Afghans left their professional lives and careers to become dishwashers,

housekeepers, supermarket cashiers, hot truck workers, and waitresses. As immigrants, our parents lost the credibility of their education, dignity, and respect.

Some participants share being subjected to discrimination throughout their education because of their Afghan or Afghan and Muslim identities. This discrimination, as discussed in the individual narratives, occurred after 9/11. Afghans and Muslims across the U.S. experienced a variety of identity-based hate crimes, discrimination, and verbal abuse (Kaifi, 2009). For some of my participants, including myself, the tragic events of 9/11 had an impact on our educational experiences.

In the individual narratives, Seffa discusses the unwelcoming climate in her middle school classroom; Ariana told stories of receiving death threats after choosing to speak out against the hate crimes targeting Muslims; and Suraya speaks of the fear that she and her family would be denied citizenship. With sadness, I heard Marwa's story of wearing a hijab and using public transportation to attend her college courses, she shares,

...how I'm gonna get to school and back, how am I going, where am I gonna live, like, who are these weirdoes that, you know, after 9/11... like my parents were, especially my father he was just so worried... he didn't want me to wear the scarf after 9/11...because the way you get around in transportation-wise in [city] is you take the bus everywhere. He's just, like...what if you're alone at night on the bus stop and somebody...hates ...Muslims, and they see you and you're openly a Muslim then what's gonna happen. And so, I mean, the experiences are that I have to deal with a lot more than what my siblings have to deal with because of the fact that I'm openly a Muslim...

In another account, Seffa shares her experience with a professor who had preconceived notions of Muslims and marriage. She states,

When I was first here I did a presentation on...someone who was Arab and Muslim, married...when I presented her case, um, just the teacher just grilled me because she just wanted to prove that it was an arranged marriage... that all married, Muslim marriages are arranged. And so I had to like stand there in front

of the class and just prove my point and no, it wasn't arranged, it didn't go through the family, they met on their own, you know.

It is evident from the narratives of a few participants that their identities as students are also intersected with that of Afghan and Muslim, making the journey to doctoral programs even more challenging in light of events such as 9/11, which serve as a catalyst for the West to continue to fear Islam (Espino, 1999) and for Afghan and Muslim students to face the added barrier of discrimination (Kaifi, 2009; Leonard, 2003).

Recognizing privilege.

*Afghanistan is a poverty-stricken country
Little girls running under the tent
To get their education
Work so I can give back
Make the cause for Afghanistan known
The chances of being an educated woman
In Afghanistan was pretty slim
I'm doing it for them too*

Our shared identities as Afghan and women working towards doctoral degrees has presented to us a privilege that may not have been possible if we had grown up in Afghanistan. Each participant shared her sense of privilege being from an underprivileged country and reaching the highest echelons of education.

In the individual narratives, Sakina shares how the Afghan refugee family inspired her to go back to school; she notes that "this," her education, is a dream that girls in Afghanistan do not have. She states,

So, it's consistently in my head... videos of little girls running under the tent to get their education in Afghanistan... I don't think people realize, being in the United States, how lucky we really are to have these opportunities and not take advantage of them. So that's always in the back of my mind.

Seffa shares the desire to give back to Afghanistan because of the privilege she has received here,

I think just being from where we are, Afghanistan, and being now a poor country and things like that, I think it's kind of, um, throughout college, and even growing up I, somehow, in a way, wanted to work so I can give back, or at least make the cause for Afghanistan known. So, I think in that way it's affected my college years...I've volunteered with different Afghan...groups.

Yasmin and Suraya express their appreciation for receiving an education in the U.S.; Yasmin recalls,

...my educational experience started when the educational system in Afghanistan started to collapse, the chances of me being an educated woman in Afghanistan was pretty slim. Even though Afghanistan had a very, um, well-rounded, excellent educational system in the 70s, the chances of me being educated to date would be extremely slim.

Similarly, Suraya expresses, ...I still thank God and I say, you know, if we hadn't come over, I always wonder what my life would have been like and what I would have done.”

The privilege that comes with being an educated Afghan woman resonates strongly with the participants. Due to confidentiality reasons, I am unable to give certain details, however, I will say that almost every participant has worked on projects to help Afghanistan or Afghan communities in the U.S., will be doing work to help Afghanistan or Afghan communities in the U.S., or will be contributing some type of literature on the Afghan population.

The data found throughout the interviews demonstrate that identity, in the many senses of the word, have influenced how Afghan women interpret, experience, and value their education. I will now discuss the next theme, Iman.

Iman (Faith).

Confidence or conviction in a person or thing; belief that is not based on evidence; belief in God or religious doctrines and teachings. (Hawker, 2002)

Throughout the interviews, the evidence of faith was clear for the participants.

Jaret and Reitzes (2009) purport that students with faith incorporated into their sense of identity tend to have greater confidence and, in turn, successful educational experiences.

Faith or belief in self, God, or family helped many of the participants journey to the doctorate. Within the emerging theme of faith, there are the sub-categories of self, religion, and family. I will now explore the three sub-themes in greater detail.

Self-faith.

*I always knew
Academically inclined
Never was a doubt
It works out
It was never a question
Where are you gonna go
And what you were gonna study
Dentist or doctor?
I knew I was gonna be a doctor
Maybe not this kind of doctor*

Throughout the interviews, I have noted faith as a factor influencing each individual's pursuit of education. The self-faith that participants expressed has been a catalyst in their ability to overcome challenges, pursue education in an unknown system, and succeed. The participants resounding faith in themselves has translated into self-efficacy, or the belief that one is capable of achieving goals set forth and bringing change into one's life through personal accomplishments (Bandura, Vittorio Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003).

A prime example of self-faith emerged from the participants' stories when they shared how they prepared for college. A few fortunate participants were guided by their high school counselors; however, for the majority it was a matter of having faith in their abilities as a student and being able to navigate the system. Suraya took matters into her own hands and began volunteering, asking peers and professors for help, and seeking out individuals that had gone through the process of applying to undergraduate and graduate programs. She explains her process,

I didn't even know, like, what's pre-SATs, how do you study for an SAT. I remember going in there, cold turkey, and opening and reading the directions for SAT exam this first time and taking this exam...I'll go to the professors, I'll ask friends, I'll go to the counselors, to find out what I need to do... I would ask my sister for help...prepared myself by trying to do all the different kind of volunteer things to see if I like it, but also get recommendations in that way... tried to maintain my grades, um, tried to apply for scholarships.

For others, such as Yasmin and myself, it was a matter of "nothing really...extraordinary." We made sure to have good grades, applied, and began undergraduate courses. Yasmin admits that if she had the chance to go back she would have done more planning. In some instances it was the faith in ability and accomplishments that moved us forward. In other instances, overcoming adversity has given participants self-efficacy. Yasmin shares, "Some days are tougher than others, but it works out."

Religious faith.

*I still thank God
It works out
Anxieties
I pray
Have faith
Faith in God
Faith that things will be ok*

Practice more pieces of my faith
This is our faith
We believe in faith
Study my faith
Became more religious
Rooted in faith
My faith gives me that value

Most of the participants identified as Muslim and stated that they had a strong tie with Islam, God, and their religious faith. Although religious faith can be defined in many ways and can be dependent on the religion, Parks (2000) finds it to be the discovery of the meaning of life or how life works, the delineation of truth from that meaning, and ultimately having faith. For a few of the participants, finding faith and moving closer to God meant practicing hijab. In most instances the practice of hijab is a personal decision of expressing faith and in others it is a “symbolic garment in identity and power struggles” (Verkuyten & Aslan Yildiz, 2010). For the participants who strongly identified with their Muslim faith, their belief in God was a factor in their success and journey.

Marwa shares that she experiences a tremendous amount of anxiety related to her studies,

...I've learned that I do have anxieties. I, I have lots of anxiety attacks and I've learned that what can help me overcome that is just praying and just my husband and spiritual like aspects of my life. That's what could help me overcome it...I've learned that I can handle a lot more than I thought I could handle...

Through her faith in God, Marwa seeks spiritual calming to deal with the anxieties caused by the stresses of her doctoral program. Ariana has learned to overcome challenges that have been affecting her doctoral experience as well. She states,

So, I think what all this has taught me is, um, you know, I have, uh, I've always been very deeply spiritual and religious but it just made me understand things in

an entirely different way...it taught me the ability to get up when a situation is bad and move instead of just taking it. You know, um, that was very important. The idea that renewal is part of, not only intellectual growth but spiritual growth as well.

For Sakina, her faith is a large part of her identity and is a symbolic practice in her life. She explains that Afghan women are stereotyped as being oppressed and she believes that oppression comes from religious ignorance not from religion itself. She explains,

...it [Islam] empowered us more to become stronger and my mom is the same way. Um, it empowered me to wear the scarf and be identified so that I can kind of erase that image of the oppressed Muslim or Afghan woman. So, as I became more religious and I knew I was in a graduate school doctorate program, I wanted to identify more so that this stereotype could, you know... it was a spiritual piece, but it was also a piece of, kind of, we're in the public and we're gonna make a difference so I want people to know that this is really a cultural thing, it's not so much rooted in the faith.

Several participants have found perspective, peace, and guidance along their journey through their belief in God and Islam and continue to include God in their path towards the doctorate.

Faith in family.

Ultimate support

There's family

Always here

Family is like the center

Provided encouragement

You've got to do better

I can rely on family

Always end up

With family

I will always have them

Although family is a major theme (which will be discussed later in the chapter), the concept of family warrants a place of its own under the theme of faith. The

participants' faith in familial support has helped many of them move forward in education believing there will be support in the process.

Ariana discusses her relationship with her father in a warm and loving manner. She notes that he has supported her throughout her educational journey and has stated to her "you know that I'm always here," giving her faith to move forward with his steady support. She knows that any decision she makes, even if it is upsetting to him initially, he will not waiver in his commitment to her, paving her path when she needs support.

Suraya shares the importance of being able to rely on her husband and mother-in-law to complete her studies. Their steady presence has given her faith that she can succeed, even when she is faced with challenges. She explains,

...there's family – that's a huge thing – like support. So, you know, you can have a lot of friends and some things will come up and down the line you always end up with family giving you the ultimate support...I can rely on family members when I really need it.

Her faith in her family and knowing that she can always rely on family has given her the strength to move through her education.

In the end, "when it all works out," many participants' leap of faith has taught them that their faith in themselves, God, or their families has been a steady motivator and support in their journeys. Their faith has given them confidence, stamina, perspective, and the ability to handle more than they imagined was possible.

Sarmaye (Capital).

Any source of advantage, power, profit, or asset. (Hawker, 2002)

The main sub-themes in the category of capital are cultural, social, and navigational. Cultural capital refers to the education and language individuals acquire

from formal schooling or familial socialization (Yosso & Garcia, 2007). Social capital references resources or networks that provide support to navigate systems (Yosso, 2005). Navigational capital refers to the tools needed to maneuver through institutions that were not meant to serve people of color (Yosso & Garcia, 2007).

Throughout the interviews, I noticed multiple variations of capital in terms of experiences that participants had in their education. Specific examples are provided in the excerpts below.

Social and navigational capital.

*I went to ESL classes
I didn't speak English until I was 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
They put us in a room that smelled like onions
I would go to ESL classes and they just stunk!
A month out of ESL class
I'm supposed to kind of learn how to
Do the vocabulary and grammar myself
I was put in a low English class
My mom, my parents didn't know how you
Come and fight the system
I needed to go into a higher English class
When did I learn grammar?
When did I learn...phonics?
It's like I didn't
It's not perfect but I picked it up
I never want to teach ESL classes!*

When individuals feel they do not have social capital within a system they are navigating, feelings of isolation or emotional despair are likely to occur (Yosso, 2005). Most participants expressed a sense of anxiety over navigating an education system through which their elders had no experience working. Some of the concerns came from language barriers; a few participants shared their experiences of being placed in ESL

classes as being unhelpful and frustrating. Other concerns were simply not knowing the “how-to” of a system that holds their end goal, education.

Suraya explained her frustrations being an immigrant and attempting to manage the U.S. education system,

...when you compare it to others who've lived here, especially of families who are educated, who know the system, who can kind of guide their children and give them that social capital, my parents didn't have that. They have the encouragement, the expectations, which is the values, but it's not the social capital that you need...which teachers do you go to, how do you get your kid to go to a higher class, oh, are there SAT classes, there are the courses, this is what you need to get. It's like you have to figure this piece out yourself. And I think if I didn't have my sister, who was a year ahead of me, or two years ahead of me, to kind of figure out what she did so I can kind of follow her or ask her...I'm not sure I would have been here by this point.

Although Suraya's parents hold Afghan social and navigational capital, they did not have the U.S. social capital to assist her in navigating a system that does not meet the needs of Afghans or many immigrant populations. Fortunately, she had the assistance of her older sister who had gone through the system. However, Suraya shares how her sister struggled as she moved through her schooling, isolated and without guidance,

And that was the upsetting thing for her, because she says, you had me, I had no one, and I'm the oldest, and the other cousins also came to ask me for help, and my uncles came to ask me for help. I had to do all of this.

Similarly, Marwa shares her isolation and struggle in managing education systems. Being the eldest and the first to attend college, she was forced to navigate all of the systems herself. She speaks of her parents' moral support, “They helped me by encouraging me and supporting me, but the system, I had to figure it out on my own.” Even though her parents were physicians in Afghanistan, their social and navigational

capital did not help Marwa and she struggled through her entire journey to the doctorate.

She simply declares, “I’m not gonna lie. It was very, very difficult...”

Cultural capital.

Culture

Language

I speak Farsi, French, German

Italian, Urdu, Pashto, Uzbek

Taking care of our women

Taking care of our elderly

Parts of my culture

Are just so much better

Nobody has our food

Nobody has our maymaan nawaazee

Now I feel better

I think we’ve accomplished something

It is crucial to note that participants have also found that Afghan cultural capital is positive and they do not view Afghan cultural capital through a deficit model (Yosso, 2005). There are many positive aspects that come from Afghan culture that provide participants with capital, even in the U.S. It is evident from participants’ accounts of Afghan culture that there are pieces, such as hospitality, respect, and collectivism that they have adopted through the cultural knowledge passed on from their families. Additionally, some participants find their language to be a significant part of their identity and have not found it to be a limitation.

Yasmin shares that she did not speak English until late childhood, yet she does not view it as having posed a negative experience on her schooling. She states

Everybody has their challenges in life and those were the ones that I had to deal with. But I don’t necessarily consider the, um, the cultural or the language barriers a huge issue. I kind of look at it as an opportunity to learn something completely different. So, in a way, I feel like I have a better understanding of, um, of a lot of issues that happen in our, in our daily life.

For Yasmin, having been raised in Afghan culture has given her a richer depth and understanding of the populations she researches and works with on a daily basis.

Similarly, Marwa exposes the importance of language in her life,

...my house always had two languages...Farsi and Pashtu all the time going on and... English and French, so, because we had to learn French too...We had these four languages all the time in the house...

She goes on to explain a great sense of her Afghan identity having been formed through her language, “being able to speak Farsi...Having that language there is a big issue in developing my cultural identity. And that’s one of the biggest reasons that I wanted to marry an Afghan.”

There is an interesting intersection among the stories in terms of how capital is viewed and a point where capital does not translate, which is where participants have mostly been left feeling disadvantaged.

Faamilee (Family).

Any group of persons closely related by blood, as parents, children, uncles, aunts, and cousins; a group of persons who form a domestic unite. (Hawker, 2002)

For many students of color, family is a central focus and support in their lives and academic success. In fact, scholars have found that family is quite fundamental to students of color, so much so that many will stay close to home for college and even struggle if they do not have some amount of familial contact throughout their educational journey (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008). Family, as defined through the interviews, are grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, husbands, in-laws, and children. The importance of family and having family support has

resonated throughout each woman's story. Within the theme of family, I will expand upon support and male support as the two sub-themes.

Support.

Family

Family values

Family at the top

Family obligations

Extended family

Afghan family

Family always comes first

Very family-oriented culture

Complete support

Financially, emotionally

Family played a large role in providing support for the participants as they journeyed towards and moved through the doctorate. However, it is noteworthy to share that for some participants, this support has not always been easily given. Three of the participants report having separate rules on how they were permitted to participate in U.S. society in comparison to their brothers. While some women had "full support," others had to fight traditional Afghan gender norms to bring change into their families, and ultimately, receive support. One participant shared that she went against her parents' will and moved away for her undergraduate education. Whether it was given outright or struggled for, participants report receiving moral, financial, physical, mental, material, and social support from their families. As the reader can discern from previous accounts, there were times in the lives of participants when their families were unable to provide them guidance, but would attempt to provide encouragement.

Through the interviews, I have found familial support in many ways. Ariana tells the stories of her father's unwavering support. He has provided her with love, shelter,

guidance and has weathered every storm with her, including her struggles post 9/11 and difficulties with her first advisor. Yasmin shares her experiences of receiving “full support” from her parents. Her parents provided her with financial and moral support throughout her educational endeavors. Seffa finds guidance from all of her family members. The youngest of four siblings, she has been showered with ideas, encouragement, and guidance to make her journey bearable even in the toughest times when she experienced discrimination. Sakina has been encouraged by her parents and now her husband. She finds peace and perspective through their spiritual bond with each other and God. Marwa seeks refuge in the supportive home she has built with her husband. The moral support her parents gave her has been translated into her marriage and they work together, even though it is tough to find time for their relationship. Suraya has her husband and her mother-in-law’s support in raising her child. As she noted in her story, they “have been at the front lines” with her throughout her doctoral program. As for me, I have always had the encouragement of my grandfather and my parents behind me. Even though my grandfather is no longer alive, his faith in me was so powerful that it has driven me here today.

Male support.

Father

Grandfather

Brothers, Cousin

Husband reassured me

I am here because

My uncles

Father’s daughter

My number one support

It’s all my father’s stories

Males being more dominant

I love my dad!
When you have the right father

As the participants shared their experiences in education and the support they received from family, a few participants specifically emphasized the support they received from the men in their life; grandfathers, fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins, and husbands.

Sakina shares her educational journey as being distinctive when looking at typical gender roles in Afghan culture,

So, I think if we look at the dominant, like, the majority of Afghan, um, gender roles there is, you know, a hierarchy of...males being more dominant than females...I didn't experience that. My situation is very unique in that me being in graduate school all the males in my life have been...my number one support, which has been my father, my husband, my brothers.

Similarly, Seffa speaks of the support her brother has given her,

So they [her family] definitely made the process easier for me...especially my brother who's five years older than me. He's the one right before me. Me and him were living at home at the time so he was basically a big, huge part of my support system...even now to this day...I ask him for things and make sure...he approves and things like that, and get his opinion on what I should do next...

For Ariana, it was not only the emotional and financial support her father provided her but it was also his stories. She shares with me her father's stories,

Well, see this is why the stories were important...he told me the story of Rabbi Habli, the Queen poet which I thought was fascinating. He told me stories about, um, there was a woman who wanted to win over her husband, her husband divorced her because he wanted a strong woman and his wife was too weak and too fragile, so she, in order to win back her husband she takes a baby calf and walks up a flight of stairs and walks back and she keeps doing that until the cow is gigantic and she's able to do it and she becomes known as the woman who can carry the cow...her husband comes back, he falls in love with her because of her strength...he doesn't even see her face, and he marries her, and it turns out it's his wife. And I thought that was such a fabulous story...there's all these stories...it really affects you psychologically without realizing it, because it gives you these

archetypes of female that's appropriate and acceptable within your culture that you can live up to...

Families have served as the primary support and general support in the lives of all participants. Whether it has been their parents, siblings, or husbands, each participant has shared that she has not journeyed alone; family has been behind us, pushing us all the way.

Summary of the Themes

The following model is based on factors that affect the journey for Afghan women and is a visual representation of the findings of this study. The framework has been modified from the original model which described the factors that affect South Asian women during their pursuit of a postsecondary education. As previously stated, through the interviews I identified four major factors that affect Afghan women on their journey towards doctoral degrees and during their tenure in the program. Identity, faith, capital, and family are all influential dimensions and were found through an exploration of their understanding of and experiences with gender, culture, immigration, and education. Finally, the four themes are connected by lines, representing the possibility of causal relationships.

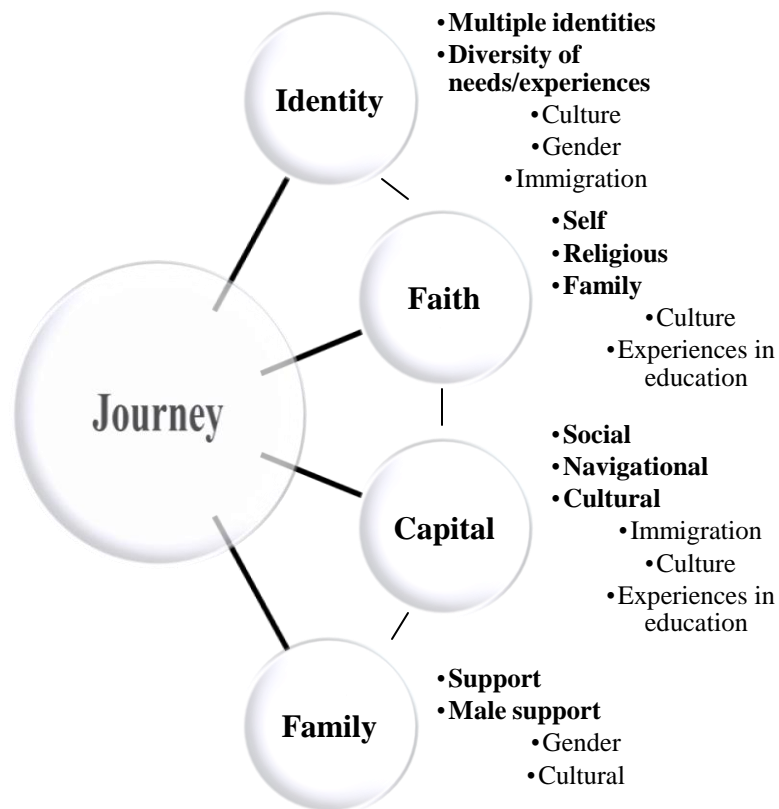


Figure 3: Factors that affect Afghan women's journey to and experiences in U.S. doctoral programs

The first factor, identity, presents the complexity of each woman's life. Within a small group, we are able to see the diversity in their identities, their diverse family lives in Afghanistan, how they experienced the academy because of their identity, and the appreciation for the privilege of receiving an education. Through an exploration of gender, culture, and family history, I was able to find that each participant has been shaped by their life experience from Afghanistan to modern day. Although the participants do not share an experience known as typical Afghan gender roles, they recognize that it is an area where the culture needs to grow and change. Finally, each

woman experiences the classroom, campus, and navigating the system based on their most salient identities and personal needs.

The second factor I explored was faith. Through the narratives, we see that participants are guided by many types of faith, faith in themselves, faith in the support and guidance their families provide, and the faith that they receive from religion. Through an examination of culture and experiences that the women have had throughout their education, it is evident that a driving force in the process has been faith. Some participants state they could count on the faith that their family would always support them and others have found their own sense of self-efficacy has given them faith to take risks and move forward. Finally, a few of the participants have found peace and endurance in the faith they find through God and the religion of Islam.

Capital, the third factor, surfaced as the participants shared their stories of immigration, culture, language, and ultimately how they have or have not assimilated into the dominant American culture. As the participants detail their experiences in navigating their educational routes, some found it was a natural process, full of support while others struggled to understand the system and felt a lack of social and navigational capital in doing so. Finally, participants acknowledge the benefits of Afghan cultural capital and language, leaving readers to note that we too have capital, albeit not recognized in the U.S.

The fourth factor, family, has had a significant impact on each participant. The topic of family surfaced through in each interview, during each area that was explored, and specifically during gender and culture. Most participants noted that their “parents are

different” or “family is different.” This difference was noted when they shared that their parents encouraged all of their children to pursue education, both men and women.

Additionally, participants note that their families have been a large part of their support network through their educational journeys. Within the theme of family, the support the participants have received from the men in their lives also came through as noteworthy.

For many participants, the support from grandfathers, fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, and cousins became paramount in their success.

This model helps to recognize factors that affect Afghan women on their journey to obtaining a doctorate. The model helps the reader to see the four main factors, the major bullet points as sub-themes, and finally the origination of the themes; helping to draw parallels to the multiple identities and the layers within each identity. It is evident that Afghan women are multi-dimensional, complex women whose life experiences are not confined to one identity or one instance; therefore, the multiple layers in each theme have the potential to influence other themes, creating a matrix of intersecting identities that influence Afghan women’s journeys. As a result of these findings, I identified several implications as well as recommendations which I will outline in the next chapter.

Summary

In chapter five I brought forth the four major themes that surfaced from the narratives of Afghan women’s journeys towards their doctoral degrees. The four themes, *hoiyat* (identity), *iman* (faith), *sarmaye* (capital), and *faamilee* (family) all include sub-themes that were relevant to exploring each topic in depth. In chapter six I will provide a summary, implications and recommendations for the study, and a conclusion.

Chapter 6: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The U.S. higher education system steadily continues to become diverse and university officials can no longer afford to engage in a stagnant dialogue about the demographics of its student populations and student needs (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Within the diversifying student body is an understudied population, Afghan women. The purpose of this research was to increase the awareness and understanding of Afghan women via an examination of their journeys toward and through doctoral programs and the factors that have impacted their path. Specifically, my research question was: What factors influence Afghan women's journeys toward and experiences in doctoral programs? In exploring their intersecting identities as Afghan and women, four themes have emerged as influential factors during their doctoral journey. I will now provide a summary of the study through the use of a conceptual model, designed to better understand the participant's paths to the doctorate.

Implications and Recommendations

Higher education faces a great challenge in the years to come: being able to support and engage its diverse student population. As we move away from traditional discussions about diversity and realize that our campuses and our nation house students and people from all corners of the globe, we can begin to create a truly inclusive movement towards excellence, acceptance, and understanding. I found two noteworthy

details that guide my implications and recommendations. The first is that Afghan women are not recognized in the academy and we cannot support what we do not recognize. The second is that most studies that present information on Afghan women represent us as recent immigrants (Beg, 2005), an international “issue” (Monsutti, 2008), or “other” within the U.S. discourse (Cloud, 2004). The lack of understanding of the depth of the population continues to leave us out of the academy and society as Americans. This second fact became even more apparent to me when, a few weeks ago, a higher education administrator inquired about my dissertation research, after sharing my topic with her she asked, “Are they going back home when they are done?” Surprised by her question, I simply replied, “we are home.”

The findings of this study have brought forth many implications for higher education faculty, staff, and Afghan families. I will discuss the implications derived from each theme and then share recommendations for the reader.

Implications: Identity.

Women of color are faced with a multitude of marginalization in the academy (Carter, Person, & Shavlik, 1996; Turner, 2002) and Afghan women are a part of this experience. Afghan women are pan-ethnic members of the larger Asian population, which tends to be bundled together despite having over 60 sub-groups that comprise the Asian student population (Lowe, 1996). In addition to not being individually recognized as a member of the Asian student population, women of color, including Afghan women, are experiencing marginalization due to a graduate environment that “fails to support and encourage” this population (Turner & Thompson, 1996).

According to the findings of this study, Afghan women experience marginalization in the academy due to a lack of knowledge about their population. The classification of South Asians under Asian creates an atmosphere where South Asians, and ultimately Afghans, are largely ignored as an ethnic group in higher education (Hussain & Bagguley, 2007). This type of classification does not allow for data on the various ethnicities that reside within the Asian category (Hune, 2002). As a result, there is little to no data on South Asian people in the U.S. (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005). Furthermore, although racial classification has changed on college campuses, it has not changed to include this sub-set of Asians, which makes the lack of data on Afghan women into a cyclical issue, continuing from the larger society into academe and back again. The lack of knowledge about the population is leading to missing support systems for Afghan students; we cannot support a population that we do not see. Some participants share that they are able to seek support as a female or a woman of color but not as an Afghan student. While there are some support systems in the academy for Asian students, they are not tailored to the needs of its vast pan-ethnic diversity. A greater understanding of the pan-ethnic Asian population is needed to be able to tailor support services for the entire student population (Lee, 1994). The next implication emerging from the interviews and exploring the topic of identity is that of isolation. Participants report being the “only one” throughout their doctoral programs, despite some of them living in heavily Afghan populated areas. This experience of isolation or being the only one is an experience that many women of color report feeling (Rosales & Person, 2003); Afghan students are most definitely an addition to this pipeline issue in

higher education. Consequently, isolation in the academy can lead women of color feeling inferior, emotionally exhausted, and invalidated (Turner, 2002). Additionally, isolation has left many women of color with emotional, psychological, and health issues that can lead to attrition (Rosales & Person, 2003; Turner & Thompson, 1996).

Recommendations.

The first recommendation is for all scholars in the academy, students and faculty need to increase awareness through research. It is evident that as academics we look to scholarly publications to inform our practice and increase our knowledge of the student groups we work with on campuses. I urge scholars who are interested in the Asian population to expand their scope to include a variety of Asian student populations and not only East Asian. For South Asian and Afghan students who are beginning their academic journey, I suggest that we all add to the literature on our population to help increase awareness and knowledge (Turner & Thompson, 1993). By collectively filling this gap in the literature, Afghan women can become a part of the academic discourse and as a result be given a voice and place in the academy (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Teranishi, 2002). This much needed literature will provide knowledge about an understudied population and enable professors and diversity officers to build a pan-ethnic Asian curriculum and diversity agenda on college campuses, which leads me to my next recommendation.

My second recommendation is for student support services, including multicultural centers. Universities across the U.S. are attempting to move towards diversifying their student populations. However, with this diversity comes the need for

identity-based support services for all of our students (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996; Rosales & Person, 2003; Turner & Thompson, 1996). In order to provide services for our student populations we must first seek to understand them. Student support service professionals should look at expanding their outreach efforts to all student populations, no matter what the size of the population (Turner & Thompson, 1996). If we are going to truly reach inclusivity, we must assess the needs of all students and be able to build programs to address and support the concerns of our pan-ethnic student populations (Carter, Pearson, & Shavlik, 1996). While it is true that there are no one-size fits all support structures for women of color (Rosales & Person, 2003), I think that as an academic community we can work to breach this lack of support services for Afghan students and other underrepresented students. Through the development of programs that reach larger numbers of our students, we can begin to break down the negative effects of isolation by building a supportive environment that fosters the growth, development, and success of all women of color in the academy (Turner & Thompson, 1996).

The third recommendation is for professionals who seek to understand and mend the pipeline and access issues we have in higher education for students of color (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). It is evident from the interviews that a few of the women live in highly Afghan populated areas, yet they do not have Afghan colleagues and classmates. I propose a bottom-up approach, where administrators and policymakers, engage in collecting pan-ethnic Asian data at the primary school level. From there the number of students to high school and on to college can be tracked. Through the interviews it is evident that Afghan students are making it to the undergraduate level but

then they are not continuing on to graduate school. Therefore, if higher education institutions have the correct number of Asians on campus, student support service professionals can begin to investigate what is causing Afghan students to stop with an undergraduate education and what we can do to mend the pipeline for this population.

Implications: Faith.

Faith, in terms of self-efficacy and religion, are important factors in many students' lives and success rates on college campuses. Studies show that self-efficacy is a factor in student outcomes and success (Jaret & Reitzes, 2009; Robinson Kurpius, Payakkakom, Dixon Rayle, Chee, & Arredondo, 2008). Students who show faith in their own academic abilities are in turn portraying confidence and good self-esteem as well. Consequently, these positive behaviors and beliefs are leading to higher achievement rates overall among students of color (Jaret & Reitzes, 2009). It is evident in this study that self-efficacy played a large role in the success and achievements of Afghan women pursuing doctorates. Many state that they "always knew" they would pursue a degree beyond a masters and others stated they had full belief in their academic abilities to take their education to the highest level possible. Through this commitment and belief in their own abilities, many of the students knew "there was never a question" of if they would pursue a higher degree, it was simply a matter of what field they would choose. Additionally, this self-efficacy gave participants the strength to move forward even when they were faced with racism, sexism, or lack of U.S. navigational capital.

With regards to religious faith, some institutions choose to leave God out of the academy; however, we cannot deny that religious faith is something that many of our

students carry onto campus with them every day (Mooney, 2010), including Muslim students (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). For some students, a relationship with God, the ability to share their faith in a communal sense, and having a personalized meaning of faith can provide more certainty in their lives (Verkuyten & Aslan Yildiz, 2010). This certainly came across multiple interviews as a strong factor in sense of self, identity, educational achievements, and even as a cultural identity. Many women stated that their faith was one of their primary identities and a large part of their lives. One student shared that her belief in God helps to relieve her academic anxieties. A few students shared that they find Afghan culture to be at odds with Islamic culture and they choose to follow their religious guidelines rather than their ethnic cultural guidelines in matters such as culturally prescribed gender roles.

Another reason why religious faith is such an impactful implication for this study is the fact that some participants have faced discrimination on college campuses as a result of their Afghan and Muslim identities in a post-9/11 context. Some of the participants of the study and millions of Afghans and Muslims have experienced discrimination as a result of 9/11 (Ahmad, 2002; Kaifi, 2009; Kromidas, 2004). Students of all ages across the U.S. engaged in dialogue about what 9/11 meant to them, the results are disturbing as we can see hate, misunderstanding of Islam (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003), mistaking people of various ethnicities for Arab or South Asian, based on their skin color (Kromidas, 2004), and an “otherization” of an Afghan-American or Muslim-American population. The results of the study show that some participants were impacted in a similar fashion throughout their educational journey. One participant received death

threats and a few others experienced discrimination in the classroom by both professors and peers. Participants who shared this common experience also expressed that there were no support services to help them adjust and cope with their fears on campus.

Recommendations.

Based on the implications for faith in Afghan women's lives, I provide two recommendations. The first recommendation is for professors and their classroom engagement. The second is for student support personnel and their efforts to create inclusive campuses and welcoming environments for all students.

For faculty, I first recommend understanding how the identities that they bring to the classroom affect their students (hooks, 1994; Tuitt, 2003). I urge them to explore their own identities and understand them in a social, historical, and political manner. It is through this understanding of the self that "professors who embrace the challenge of self-actualization will be better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply" (hooks, 1994, p. 22).

Through an understanding of their own identities, I recommend that professors move towards an understanding of the students they teach. I suggest that they educate themselves on South Asian students, Afghan students, and Muslim students and utilize their new knowledge to dismantle stereotypes within themselves (Crosland Nebeker, 1998; Nichols & Quaye, 2009). When possible, I encourage faculty to include these students in the academic discourse through course readings or classroom discussions.

It is my hope that professors would adopt an inclusive pedagogy (Tuitt, 2003) to be able to accomplish the above recommendations. Inclusive pedagogy focuses

on the education of the whole individual—that is, the union of the mind, body, and soul of human beings. By viewing students as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences, inclusive pedagogy offers some insight into how college educators can create classrooms in which diversity is valued as a central component of the learning process (Tuitt, 2003, p. 243).

The practice of inclusive pedagogy promotes a healthy relationship between professors and students. In this respectful exchange of thoughts, students are encouraged to use their personal voices (Dlamini, 2002; Tuitt, 2003). Students also receive personal attention and the classroom experience is encouraging and developmental which allows students to comprehend their coursework more, become more motivated, and experience an increase in their learning overall. Ultimately, student-professor relationships can reduce feelings of isolation (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Turner & Thompson, 1996). Inclusive pedagogy also recognizes the need for multiple methods of instruction (Tuitt, 2003). Having multiple instructional methods increase students' level of engagement. Increased engagement allows for a greater ability to comprehend course work, heightened analytical skills, sharper communication skills, and increased peer interactions (Jones et al., 2002; Tuitt, 2003). Finally, inclusive pedagogy promotes the practice of dismantling perceptual barriers between professors and students (Tuitt, 2003).

The second recommendation is for multicultural centers and other student support service centers on our campuses. It is evident through the impact that 9/11 has had on many of our student populations (Kaifi, 2009; Leonard, 2003; Mahaffey & Smith, 2009) that institutions need to have support and a response system for our Muslim, South Asian, Arab, Afghan, or anyone who may be mistaken as any of the above. Furthermore,

scholars (Howard-Hamilton, Hinton, & Ingram, 2009; Mooney, 2010) have found that students religious beliefs support them through college. Mooney (2010) states that students whose religious traditions are supported on campus report greater satisfaction with their college experience and receive better grades. Additionally, “faith traditions help underrepresented groups develop positive and purposeful methods to counteract detrimental events” (Howard-Hamilton et al., 2009, p. 169).

I recommend that multicultural centers talk to religious student groups and assess if their needs are being met (Mahaffey & Smith, 2009). In the case of any student group on campuses, there are no set guidelines or rules that can meet the needs of all Muslim students (Duderija, 2010), however, we can create welcoming environments by taking actions such as: ensuring there are halal (kosher) food options (Mahaffey & Smith, 2009), prayer spaces (Howard-Hamilton et al., 2009), and the awareness that Islamic holidays and holy day of the week are not the same as dominant religious holidays (Ipgrave, 2010). Finally, I urge multicultural centers to have a response plan or team of individuals who are ready, trained, and able to support student groups (Mahaffey & Smith, 2009) who are likely to be targeted as a result of tragedies that occur in the larger society. “Educators face the challenge of acknowledging students’ religious/spiritual values in the development of professional knowledge, skills, and values. Being sensitive to a student’s religious/spiritual value system may be an important opportunity to demonstrate respectfulness for various belief systems” (Kane & Jacobs, 2010, p. 66).

Implications: Capital.

The lack of U.S. cultural capital, social capital, and navigational capital are all salient issues in the lives of some participants. In many cases, immigrant families do not have the capital to move forward in U.S. society in the same manner as American-born individuals. In some situations, even U.S.-born individuals who are second generation American are raised with a different set of cultural and social capitals, therefore, making the navigation of U.S. educational systems difficult (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, (2005). Additionally, as certain populations begin the process of acculturation or reevaluating and integrating their own cultural norms with those of the dominant culture (Kim et al., 2003), we must evaluate the notion of value placement on the knowledge of historically underprivileged populations. In other words, “whose culture has capital?” (Yosso, 2005, p.69).

It is evident from the interviews that the participants come from families that were educated and successful in Afghanistan, therefore, coming from a background of cultural wealth. However, to some degree, all of the participants struggled to make it through the U.S. education system, especially in early years. I would argue this is not because Afghans do not have cultural or social capital, but that our capital does not translate in the U.S. When capital is lost in translation, it is easy for the dominant culture to begin to think of “other” cultures or peoples in a deficit manner (Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Garcia, 2007). “Deficit thinking permeates U.S. society, and both schools and those who work in schools mirror these beliefs (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). These deficit beliefs are apparent through some of the narratives, as we see that some participants were held back in school,

or placed in less challenging courses even though they were high achievers. The deficit thinking held by school officials and the lack of U.S. social capital in the women's families, created a difficult journey for some participants.

Contrary to the belief that communities of color do not possess cultural wealth, the participants of this study have shown an appreciation for Afghan culture and language. Some participants share that they value the bond that Afghan families have and the support they provide each other. Other participants have a great appreciation for being raised with multiple languages. In essence, the participants entered their educational journey with linguistic capital or the social and intellectual skills that are gained through the experience of speaking in multiple languages (Yosso, 2005).

Recommendations.

For administrators at all levels of education, I would first recommend that we move away from a deficit understanding of communities of color (Yosso & Garcia, 2007). It would benefit schools and universities to understand that the dominant, White culture is not the only culture with capital (Crossland Nebeker, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005). It is also important to have an understanding of the benefits of supporting and creating bilingual students (Yosso & Garcia, 2007) in this increasingly globalizing economy (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The second leg of this recommendation is to understand that each culture has a different system for navigating and understanding education (Yosso, 2005), therefore, we need to work together to make sure that immigrant families and first generation students are clear about how to successfully move forward in the U.S. education system (Szalacha, Kerivan Marks, Lamarre, Garcia Coll,

2005). It is evident that ethnic immigrants vary in their assimilating patterns in the U.S. (Song, 2010); as a result, I would recommend having systems in place to orient immigrant families into the U.S. education system, starting when their children enter elementary education. Building a positive and familiar relationship between families and institutions can ensure student success (Szalacha et al., 2005).

Implications: Family.

Family is an important part of many communities of color and can become the driving force in many students' academic lives (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gandara, 1995; Perez & McDonough, 2008). The primary source of self-efficacy, culture, language, knowledge, and sense of belonging is family for students of color (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gandara, 1995). Perez and McDonough (2008) have found that students of color will often choose to stay close to home for their college education, just as some of my participants have done. Although family can be challenging, especially when attempting to explain U.S. educational culture, students of color still find refuge in their family structures more so than their institutions (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007).

Many of the participants of this study have expressed both positives and negatives regarding family life. There were times when some struggled and felt that their parents did not understand their educational needs or were not able to assist them in the college application process. Yet, overwhelmingly, the participants expressed gratitude for their families' support and encouragement; especially the men in their family.

Recommendations.

For higher education faculty and administrators, I recommend building family-like systems on college campuses (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007) and including students' families in their learning processes. Scholars (Gandara, 1995; Perez & McDonough, 2008) have found that many students of color would benefit from family-like systems since they are accustomed to family-based ways of life. By building an academic family on campuses, students of color will be able to create relationships with peers, faculty, and mentors that resemble those within their families. In turn, this exchange will provide a similar type of support, encouragement, and love that has helped them navigate their education thus far (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). One example of family-like systems is cohort models. Cohorts are groups of students who begin and move through educational programs together. Sapon-Shevin and Chandler-Olcott (2001) have found that cohorts can provide a community for students; however, they can also become detrimental if they are not nurtured appropriately. Cohorts need trust, love, accountability, and the guidance of faculty to be successful, family-like, learning communities. In addition to building these structures within the classroom, I would recommend building a sense of community for students of color outside of the classroom through student support groups or networks. Having an added layer of support strengthens the chances of success (Turner & Thompson, 1996). Finally, I suggest that educational programs invite students' families to campus for orientations and student recognition banquets. By including families, we can help demystify the university for parents who have not attended school

in the U.S., in turn alleviating some of the stresses that students face when their families do not fully understand the difficulties of committing to higher education.

For Afghan families, I would recommend we acknowledge the weight of the impact we have on our daughters' lives. Although family is not central to the lives of every Afghan woman in the academy, for the select few in this study it has been. I would urge our families to support and attempt to understand the difficulties and differences we have in our educational journeys (Yusuf, 2007), especially as we move to completing doctoral degrees. For the men in our lives I recommend they use this study as an example of how necessary their voice and their male privilege is in propelling us to the highest level of education. Remember that without males as allies, we will not progress (bell, 2000) in the movement to educate our Afghan women. Although it can be difficult and sometimes ostracizing to move away from cultural gender norms (Salam, 2004), I recommend Afghan families take note of the power of education and the benefit it brings to our daughters, future generations, our community, and our advancement as contributing members of U.S. society.

Implications: Conducting research as an insider.

In the spirit of practicing reflexivity as a qualitative researcher (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003; Patton, 2002) and sharing the end of my journey as a participant in this research, I would like to describe the experience of conducting the interviews, the researcher/participant relationship, and researcher credibility as an “insider.”

The reflections provided here were recorded throughout my journey as I conducted interviews. I kept a journal with detailed accounts of the interview process

with each participant, conversations we had before and after the interview, as well as my own thoughts and feelings (Patton, 2002). Not only has this provided me with an extra method of triangulation in order to ensure credibility of the research but it has also allowed me to share the end of my journey with the reader.

As I embarked on my interviews fully armed with all the tips and cautions of qualitative research and the researcher being the instrument (Patton, 2002), I remember feeling excited and nervous about how the process would be for both me and my participants. Scholars who are researching their own population must be careful to build trust with participants and avoid assuming that they will automatically be accepted as a member or “insider” of the population (Few et al., 2003). Through all of my interviews I made sure to be as clear as possible about who I was, what I was doing, why I was doing it, and to open up for conversation prior to the interviews. I wanted very much to disclose enough about myself to make my participants feel comfortable but to be aware of power dynamics and not interrupt them during their stories with personal citations. However, it became evident to me that no matter how transparent we are as researchers, as humans, we have preconceived notions and unfounded perceptions. This became clear when one participant was discussing 9/11 and she said, “You were probably a lot younger at the time,” implying that I would not remember the event. She later apologized when she found out my age and we laughed about her assumption.

Building trust.

As I moved through my interviews I noticed two major issues. One was researcher credibility and the other was the relationship boundaries between myself and

participants. I explained to one participant the importance of meeting them in person; i.e., establishing a relationship and trust, she laughed and said, “we’re Afghan...you don’t need to build trust, you are accepted.” Another participant stated that she had received my recruitment e-mail from several colleagues and then finally decided she could find time to “help.” We chatted on the way to the restaurant where the interview was conducted and we told stories about our families. I shared with her that my father was concerned that I would not tell him the participants’ names for the sake of their confidentiality. He said, “Well, what if one of them kills you then I can’t even tell the police go look for this woman, she killed my daughter.” We laughed together and she shared, “yeah, my dad was concerned about me picking you up and I said, come on dad what’s an Afghan girl gonna do to me?” Interestingly, this participant asked two women to participate in my research and I was able to conduct one interview the next day and one the following week. When I thanked them for their time and speedy response they both replied that it was fine and they were happy to help. It was as though the participant that connected us had built that credibility for me through sharing our positive interaction with the other two women.

The moments of bonding prior to the interview became quite crucial and were wonderful experiences. This was the time that set the mood and tone of the interview. The initial conversations and questions established a relationship, comfort, and credibility between myself and the participants. Several of the participants stated, “I feel like I have known you for a long time.” However, this was not the case for all of the interviews. One interview I conducted did start off with a series of questions, before we even reached

the consent form stage. She stated that she had never heard of me so she had done a Google search on me then asked her dad if it was a good idea to participate in my research. Her father had received the e-mail from an Afghan community member in Denver that sent the information on to his Afghan professionals' network. He approved that she participated and she repeated, multiple times, "You know, I wanted to help out." She simply needed to make sure the project was "legit" and my research was credible. This poses the question of what it means to be an insider to the group being studied? As a researcher I am an outsider, however, as an Afghan woman I am an insider. This did not mean that I would be accepted by all the participants simply because of my identity as an insider (Merriam et al., 2001). I found that the issue of insider/outsider status was quite complex and that the multiple identities brought forth by both the researcher and participant had to engage in a negotiation before a comfort level was reached.

We went on and had a wonderful interview and were able to share ideas on the education system in Afghanistan after the interview was completed. I appreciate having had this experience; it was different from the other interviews and provided me with a perspective that I needed to face as a researcher, being questioned by a member of my own group. It is that questioning that built trust and comfort between us and it is often that discomfort that allows me as a researcher to define my position, in turn, giving me a voice to defend my work and authenticity.

Being an insider to the population I was researching posed a different set of challenges in terms of credibility, that of having insider knowledge or tacit knowledge. I noticed, as I conducted the interviews, participants would make comments about Afghan

culture or Afghans, for which an outsider would not necessarily have a point of reference if they were conducting this research. For example, comments such as, “you know how Afghan men are,” “do the Afghan thing,” and “typical Afghan regular” were made during several of the interviews. When feasible, I would follow up with a clarification question about what each phrase meant. I expressed that I had an understanding of what that meant but wanted to clarify what that means for the participant. Although it meant the same thing for the both of us, it is important for me to never assume that I know what someone is referring to, even if we are from the same population because differing life experiences bring differing meanings to tacit knowledge.

Ethics in research.

I noticed that the issue of Afghaniyat (Afghan ways) came across in almost every interview I conducted. There are certain cultural standards for how we treat our “guests” and although I felt the participants were guests in my research, they remained true to Afghaniyat and treated me as a guest in their home town. Many participants said they wanted me to stay in their home but also acknowledged that I could not cross that barrier within this relationship. One said, “I feel bad that you aren’t staying with us. I should be cooking you dinner instead of giving you directions to a restaurant. But I totally understand it would taint your data and you’d have to wake up with my child at 6 a.m.” I met one participant’s father because he drove her to the interview and he said to me, “did she invite you to the house? I don’t know if these kids remember their Afghaniyat anymore.” I found it equally difficult to have to say no because it is disrespectful in our culture to turn down someone’s hospitality. Fortunately, all parties involved understood

the delicate manner of the relationship and some asked me to come back and visit after I graduate. Although some would argue that my research methods would not require this distance, I felt that I was not conducting ethnographic research and had not requested permission to enter the participants' home through my institutional review board (IRB) application. I was concerned this would be a direct violation of my agreement with the IRB board and would result in negative consequences. Finally, even though some of the participants invited me to their homes, I felt it would be a violation of the original time I had requested of them as a participant in my research.

On numerous occasions, participants inquired about the other participants I had found, interviewed, or would interview. Many understood that I would not be able to share details in order to protect their confidentiality; however, they would ask some questions. One woman asked how many participants I had found. When I shared with her that I had found 10 and only six were able and willing to participate, she stated, "Now I feel better. I think we've accomplished something." It was moving to see the importance and strength that numbers can provide us with when we are an underrepresented population. Another participant did not press for details but expressed interest in knowing other participants responses and reading the final dissertation results. She shares,

...I would love to know how the other women that you interview perceive that [gender roles] because it would be really interesting to see how their family lives were, and how they perceive their mothers. And what kind of education their mothers had. I would love to see that because it really would be interesting to see if how, how much of an impact that has on a woman's decision to pursue higher education.

A few participants asked me to ask the other participants if they would be willing to share their e-mail addresses so we could build a support network for Afghan women academics. Additionally, an Afghan professor who supported me in recruiting participants will assist me in creating a list-serv for young Afghan professionals.

Concluding thoughts.

I made note of one more interesting experience along my journey of meeting participants. I found that everywhere I went, there was something Afghan. I share a journal entry that captures my experience below.

In a country where I thought my culture was missing, there has been a trend of all things Afghan during my interview travels. While some parts have been self-induced, such as interviewing Afghan women and eating at Afghan restaurants, other things have been brought to me. When I traveled to [city] it was Persian New Year and there were celebrations all over the city for Afghans and Iranians. When I flew to [city] there were banners under street lights that read Happy Persian New Year. In another city there were several abstract paintings in the hotel I was staying at that resembled the Afghan flag and a sign underneath it for a Farsi congregation meeting that was being held that weekend. When I travelled to [city] my cab driver from the airport to the hotel was Afghan. He was speaking to his wife on his cell phone then ended the call and asked me what I was doing in [city]. When I told him, he seemed to be a bit embarrassed that he was having a conversation with his wife and I knew they were arguing. We laughed together as he shared in Farsi, “She is always asking me where I am! Where do you think I am, woman, I am working.” He then asked where my family was from (in Afghanistan) and shared

his life story of how he came to America, built a wonderful life, and then lost it all when the stock market crashed. He said it was nice to meet a young Afghan who was pursuing a higher education. We exchanged stories until I arrived at my destination and it was a nice welcome to that city.

As I come to the end of my educational journey I am grateful that I did not give into my self-doubt and the negativity of a few individuals. There was a time where I was not sure I could find enough participants for my study, however, my committee encouraged me to move forward. As I searched for participants I had many Afghan naysayers cross my path. I would hear comments such as “why are you doing your dissertation on this? You know how Afghans are, they are going to bail on you,” “I thought you were crazy when I read your topic. Why would you want to study Afghans?” and “I’m tired of hearing the woe-is-me stories of we fled in the middle of the night. So what! You’re not the only one.” As I continued to hear these negative comments, I grew more and more concerned about the future of our culture. Are we losing our culture to Americanization? Have Afghans lost the ability to see the beauty of their language and capital? Then I met my participants and my fears turned into hope; the future of Afghan-Americans is bright. To the negative individuals that crossed my path, I would like to say I have ended my journey with wonderful, brilliant, intelligent Afghan women’s stories and begun my new journey with a network of Sarafranz Afghan women colleagues and friends. Finally, to those who are going to research their own populations I would recommend you approach the process with an open mind, heart, and spirit. It will be an amazing journey, no matter the outcome.

Recommendations for Further Research

Just as Yasmin stated, “the more I learn the more I want to learn because I realize how much I don’t know,” this research too has taught me how much more there is to learn about the Afghan population. Based on the findings of this research, I have provided a few recommendations for further research below. The first recommendation is to conduct a similar study with a larger sample size and the inclusion of identities that were not represented in this research. For example, looking at various tribal affiliations, various religious affiliations, undergraduate Afghan students, Afghan men in doctoral programs, different sexual orientations, and domestic versus international Afghan student populations can enhance our understanding of this diverse population. Additionally, conducting research on the effects of racial identity salience on interpretations of culture can help expand our understanding of the complexity of how women of color interpret their lived experiences. Furthermore, adding this research to the literature on students of color can expand the current knowledge about the experience of people of color in academe (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008) on an even greater level. This knowledge can in turn serve as a catalyst for furthering diversity discussions on campuses nationwide and ultimately creating more inclusive student services and teaching practices.

Based on the accounts of the participants, there were no other Afghan women enrolled in their individual programs. I would propose research on access issues within the Afghan population to better understand why Afghans are not entering the academy or advancing beyond undergraduate education. It is also evident, based on the narratives,

that Muslim students continue to face hardships on college campuses. I would suggest the experiences of Muslim students on a post-9/11 campus be further explored to provide the academic community with a better understanding of a misunderstood population (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003).

Finally, I would propose using a variety of theoretical frameworks to guide similar research. For example, it is clear from the narratives that each participant has shown resiliency throughout her journey to and through doctoral programs. One theory that could be used to analyze their journeys would be resilience theory. Resilience theory is utilized to understand how individuals access internal and external factors to succeed in the face of adversity (Laser & Nicotera, in press). For examples, Greene et al. (2003) found that factors such as caring relationships, support networks, faith, supportive teachers, temperament, and attitude all contribute to resiliency. It would be insightful to examine Afghan women in doctoral programs through a resilience theory lens and explore which internal and external factors fostered their resilience and ultimately assisted them in pursuing doctorates against major challenges, barriers, and obstacles.

Conclusion

This research provided the experiences of seven Afghan women in U.S. doctoral programs. Beginning with a history of Afghanistan and a review of the factors that affect South Asian women in postsecondary education, I moved forward with a narrative inquiry methodology and critical race feminism lens to explore what factors affect Afghan women as they journey through doctorates.

The participants of this dissertation shared how they, or their families, travelled to the U.S. and began living an unknown culture and navigating a foreign educational system. The reader can see through the participants' narratives that they have been influenced by their personal identities, faith, capital, and family. Through the findings from their stories, I provided implications and recommendations for institutions of higher education and families. Through the implications, we can begin to understand the experiences of Afghan women in doctoral programs and the factors that have influenced their educational journeys. Additionally, we can increase our understanding of an understudied population and work towards building more inclusivity within the academy.

Although this study documents the lives of only a few Afghan women, I do not believe that our experience is any less valid or real than a study on women of color with a larger sample size. In the words of Harper and Kuh (2007),

...even if these [seven] students represent an outlook that is not shared among the majority of their same-race peers, their perspectives should not be dismissed. Those who work at institutions that are truly committed to enacting espoused commitments to multiculturalism and inclusivity will use these data to improve the experiences of students who feel this way, no matter how many or how few there are. (p. 8)

Our journey and our stories do not end here. This research is a small addition to a larger body of literature that is yet to be explored and written. It is time for people to know we are here too. We have a voice too. We have needs as doctoral students. And as Sakina said, "we're educated too."

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Appendix A

STUDY ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Bushra Aryan and I am an advanced doctoral student at the University of Denver in the Higher Education program at the Morgridge College of Education. I am beginning my dissertation research which will explore the experiences of Afghan women in U.S. doctoral programs. I would like to explore how this unique set of women immigrated to the U.S., have balanced Afghan culture with American culture, and their journeys into higher education.

I identify as an Afghan-American woman who has navigated both Afghan and American culture. I was born in Kabul a few months before the Russian invasion and my family came to the U.S. as refugees shortly thereafter. My life experiences, my strong ties with my culture, and passion for education have led me to undertake researching the experiences of Afghan women in higher education.

Therefore, as both an Afghan-American woman and a doctoral student, I hope to learn more about women who share similar backgrounds. I look forward to engaging in conversation with you about your experiences with culture, college choice, and experiences in education. Finally, I am excited to include your journey with the stories of other women of color in higher education.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at baryan@du.edu or 303-803-6003.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you!

Most appreciative,

Bushra Aryan

PhD Candidate, Higher Education
And
Graduate Research Coordinator
Center for Multicultural Excellence
1981 S. University Blvd.
Denver, CO 80208
303-871-2946

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Dissertation Research:

From Kabul to the Academy: Narratives of Afghan Women's Journeys to U.S. Doctoral Programs

You are invited to participate in a study that will explore the experiences of Afghan women in U.S. doctoral programs. This study aims to fill an empirical void in our understanding about how Afghan women journey to the doctorate and negotiate their experiences in graduate school. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of the researchers dissertation work at the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. The study is conducted by Bushra Aryan, a doctoral student in higher education. Results will be used to publish in a dissertation and complete doctoral work. Bushra can be reached at baryan@du.edu or 303-871-2946. This project is supervised by the course instructor, Dr. Frank Tuitt. He can be contacted at ftuitt@du.edu or via phone at 303-871-4573.

Participation in this study should take five hours of your time. Participation will involve responding to questions about your decision to pursue a doctorate and your experiences in graduate school. The initial interview will be conducted in person and the follow-up interview will be held over the phone. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal, such as becoming anxious or sad. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. I respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss.

The participants will benefit from the research because they will be able to share their experiences and their story. This can be a healing process and an empowering process to be heard and to have their accounts portrayed in the literature. Society will benefit from having this research when it is published and added to the literature in education. College administrators and professors will benefit from having information regarding the experiences of Afghan women in academe because it will support them in their pedagogical practices as well as their student support services.

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data. Any reports generated as a result of this study will use only group aggregated themes and supportive data will be presented through quotations that do not include identifying information. The collected and

compiled data and audio tapes will be stored in the interviewers locked file cabinet at the researcher's residence.

However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 303-871-4052. Letters may be mailed to the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. The form will be gone over with you by the interviewer prior to the start of the interview.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature

Date

I agree to be audio taped.

I do not agree to be audio taped.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions

History

- 1) Tell me about your family's history of coming to the U.S.
- 2) When did you come here and how old were you?
- 3) What was your family's life like in Afghanistan?
- 4) Did your family attend postsecondary education in Afghanistan?

Education

- 1) Describe your journey from high school to college. How did you decide you were going to attend and where you would attend?
- 2) How did you prepare for college?
- 3) Who supported you in your transition from high school to college?
- 4) How did you decide to pursue graduate school and ultimately a doctorate?
- 5) How has your experience been in graduate school as an Afghan woman? Do you feel supported? Do you have mentors? Describe any other challenges you have faced.
- 6) What is your area of study? Where are you at in your work?
- 7) What drove you to choose your current area of study?
- 8) What have you learned about yourself through your educational journey and in your doctorate program?

Culture and Gender

- 1) How do you identify culturally, ethnically and/or racially?
- 2) How would you describe Afghan culture?
- 3) How would you describe gender roles in Afghan culture?
- 4) What role, if any, has culture and gender played in your life?
- 5) What role, if any, has culture and gender played on your decision to pursue a doctorate?
- 6) How do you negotiate your Afghan culture and identity with your American culture and identity?
- 7) What were significant barriers in negotiating your cultural identities?

Immigration

- 1) How many generations has your family been in the U.S.?
- 2) How has being from a diaspora population affected your college experience?

- 3) How do you think foreign born and U.S. born individuals differ in their educational experiences?
- 4) How are the educational experiences of varying generations different? For example, how are your experiences different from your parents, older family members, and younger family members?