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STRIKING A BALANCE:

IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND BELONGING IN THE GUJARATI-AMERICAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

By

Leana Reich

In

Anthropology

Submitted to the

Department of Anthropology

University of Pennsylvania

Thesis Advisor: Professor Andrew Carruthers

2019

Abstract

This project explores the question of how children of immigrants negotiate a sense of belonging through expressions of bilingualism and biculturalism in the public and private spheres. Drawing upon insights from linguistic anthropology, Asian studies, and migration studies in conjunction with information gleaned from a series of semi-structured interviews of a single informant born in the United States to parents who emigrated from India, I seek to understand how a specific experience of an individual fits into the larger discussion of identity, language, and belonging. Experiencing culture is a distinctly and exclusively human process, and this project makes sure to treat the experience of "striking a balance" between cultural identities in terms of its human effects and consequences.

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I. Introduction

My research seeks to understand how children of immigrants negotiate a sense of belonging to a specific cultural identity through bilingual and diasporic practices in the public and private spheres. To explore this issue, I decided to take a biographical approach, one that explores the experiences and life story of an individual informant born in the United States whose parents emigrated from India. This approach unfolds in a series of semi-structured interviews. Throughout this paper, I argue that the (im)migrant experience is simultaneously personal and universal and must be understood from a combination of these aspects. Language and diasporic belonging relate to the immigrant experience in terms of: culture as a background of understanding, experience as a continuation of connection, and identity as a method of manipulating linguistic and other behavioral signs to fit more perfectly in specific spheres of life.

According to Oxford Dictionaries, "bilingual" is defined as fluency in or use of two linguistic and cultural codes. The term "bicultural" is defined as having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups. I choose to use the term "bicultural" over that of "diasporic belonging" because it is less tied to the notion of place. For Priya, diasporic belonging is a mediation between aspects of a "triadic geography of belonging" (Vertovec 1999) "here," "there," and "everywhere," where "everywhere" is equivalent to global diasporic culture. At the same time, this triadic definition focuses too much on place to properly present Priya's experience striking the balance between two nations, two identities, and two cultural forms, hence the use of the term "bicultural."

The terms bilingualism and biculturalism, because they represent experiences of actual people, cannot be limited to dictionary definitions. These definitions are not incorrect, but

phenomenologically incomplete: they do not take into account the experiences which color these meanings. Throughout this paper, I use the terms "bilingual" and "bicultural" as descriptions of semiotic register phenomena insofar as my informant takes seriously what she comes to call her bicultural and bilingual identities. It must be said, then, that "Language" and "Culture" do not exist as overarching wholes. Language is not simply "the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way" (Oxford Dictionaries). Culture is more than a semiotic concept of man being suspended in "webs of significance" that he himself has spun (Geertz 1973, 311). Rather, they are labels assigned to sign constellations that are part of greater experiential wholes. In other words, linguistic and cultural forms are representations of experience of a person and only have meaning in such a context.

My informant's personal definitions of these terms as they relate to her experience as a child of immigrants will come to light in the data presentation and analysis portion of this project. It is for the reason of keeping the focus on human experience that I framed my research problem not as a question, but as a means of improvisational discovery. Publications on identity, language, and belonging are not in short supply (see Dick 2018, Wirtz 2014, Fabian 1986). I argue that only by understanding how the immigrant experience affects the everyday individual life of those it touches can we fully approach its scope.

Using a single informant with whom I have been friends for more than seven years – and therefore have unobtrusively observed for the same period – allows me to make sense of her immigrant experience as a reasoning for how she comports herself in daily life and as a comparison to existing literature on the same topic. Before delving into research, I offer my reader a disclaimer on the politics of representation. I am neither South Asian nor a child of

immigrants, so in my research presentation I aim not to give my informant a voice on her experience of culture, but rather to give her voice a platform from which to share her personal journey. In order to correctly present my informant's experience, I must use the right terms. It is for this reason that certain terminology – such as "home" and "host" – is placed in quotations. These terms refer, respectively, to a person's native and non-native cultural forms as determined by their identification rather than by any quantitative metric. In addition, the terms "private" and "public" (in context of being different "spheres") while self-explanatory, also require recontextualization. In my informant's experience, these spheres are associated with the performance of different cultural forms based on her understanding of which expression is most situationally appropriate. They are not just private and public: they are representations of how biculturality must constantly reconfigure itself to be appropriately received in an environment.

After the section on the politics of representation follows the first content-based portion of my project: a review of published literature as it pertains to four overarching themes. The first theme of the literature review is linguistic anthropology as a field of study. Main takeaways from this section will include understanding of: what is considered "normal" and deviant from that "normal" (in other words, how cultural biases come to determine our expectations of the world), how background and experience inform the connections we make in everyday life, and the conjunction and disjunction between "home" and "host" linguistic and cultural forms. The second theme explores (im)migration, diaspora, and belonging, and outlines: connecting to a community through upholding its linguistic and cultural forms, what linguistic or cultural form is most applicable in what situation, and legitimization of a national identity through a concrete sense of belonging. The third theme, South Asians in the United States, underlines: specificities of the South-Asian-American identity, the expression of South Asian identity in everyday life,

and the idea of overlapping regional and overarching identities. The fourth and final theme of the literature review is (South) Asian-American Studies. This theme includes understanding of: hierarchy of cultural forms, whether different cultural experiences create a more all-encompassing or specific association of self, the importance of remembering your roots, speaking the same language figuratively versus literally, and the idea that there is no right or wrong way to experience cultural identity. Main takeaways from the literature review are outlined in the theoretical framework, which immediately follows.

Following the theoretical framework is the presentation of methods and methodology, which outlines my process of conducting semi-structured interviews with my informant. These interviews focus on six topics: background, definitions and word associations, assimilation, language, culture, and separation and togetherness. Following this is the presentation of data, with each section focusing on a different interview topic. It is this interview information which places the research from the literature review in context of true human experience. To accomplish this goal, presentation of interview information from my informant is directly compared – and sometimes contrasted – to information from published research on the same topics of the immigrant experience. In some capacities, my informant's experience seems to match that of other children of immigrants, whether or not they are specifically Gujarati. In other capacities, my informant has been raised in a manner which diverges from other accounts of Gujarati- and Indian-Americans. Either way, my informant serves to present only her experience. She is not in any way representative of the cultural forms with which she identifies, just as any of the publications I indicate in my literature review are not be-all-end-all guides to their respective topics.

In the conclusion, I will return to the main themes outlined by the literature review in order to solidify them in the context not only of pre-existing literature, but of my informant's experience. In addition, I note the universality and individuality of her experience as it relates to different levels of granularity within her identity and different spheres of belonging.

I seek to understand the experiences which determine what it means to belong in a place. By managing her bilingualism and biculturalism and matching her expression of cultural forms to what is acceptable in a certain sphere, my informant constantly makes decisions – whether or not she consciously knows she is making them – about the politics of belonging. Worrying about the reception of difference is a product of the fact that, as a child of immigrants, my informant is simultaneously a child of diaspora. Her experience in this capacity hinges on the fact that she has had to teach herself the ways of her "host" in the public sphere while maintaining her notion of "home" in the private sphere. "Striking a balance" between cultures means negotiating this dual identity both in how she feels connected to either "half" of herself and in how that identity is represented to the world.

II. Politics of Representation

I am monolingual, monocultural, and monotheistic. My family has lived in America for at least four generations, making me confident to self-report as "white" on any census. This is all to say that I do not personally understand the experience of my informant. It is for this reason that I find her experience so interesting. Having known my informant for over seven years, I have until now only been allowed small glimpses into her cultural identity: I have tasted her mother's food and attended ceremonies with her at her temple, I have obsessed with her over American boy bands and stressed with her over schoolwork. In short, while I understand my informant's public

persona, I wanted to comprehend more deeply what goes on behind the scenes in her life. I wanted to know the reason behind the code-switching I had witnessed, to understand why she was bound to a 9:00 PM curfew and not allowed to consume alcohol. I do not pretend to comprehend my informant's experience, and for that reason I am able to report on it with an open mind. I cannot present her entire existence, nor do I intend the information she offers to represent her cultural identity as a whole. Rather, because of my respect and care for my informant as a person, I am interested in portraying her story as a way to actualize the research I have done on the topics of language, culture, identity, and belonging. I aim to present an authentic picture of the person who first sparked my interest in this topic and at the same time understand her experience on a deeper level.

III. Literature Review and Existing Research

As distinct academic fields or bounded institutional "disciplines," linguistic anthropology and (South) Asian-American Studies each have their own foci, trajectories, and theoretical concerns. Linguistic anthropology, "the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice" (Duranti 1997, 2), has – over the past few decades – been focused on understanding the intersection between linguistic structures, practices, and ideologies. These longstanding concerns differentiate linguistic anthropology from (South) Asian-American Studies: a field much newer and less consistent in its self-image and application. Many institutions offer majors, minors, or programs which encompass either South Asian studies or Asian-American studies. However, one would be hard-pressed to find an undergraduate program in which South Asia is not categorized as an amalgam within a more general course of study. Even where Asian-American studies programs do exist, such as the University of Pennsylvania,

the experiences of South-Asian-Americans are considered as but one aspect of the larger Asian-American experience. By jointly exploring the two disciplines in the context of immigration, diaspora, and belonging as it pertains to the United States, my thesis will bring new light to the preexisting scholarship of both linguistic anthropology and (South) Asian-American Studies at the undergraduate level. This literature review will be organized thematically with a focus on the following topics: linguistic anthropology as a field; (im)migration, diaspora, and belonging; South Asians in the United States, and (South) Asian-American Studies as a field.

A. What is Linguistic Anthropology?

Linguistic anthropology, as a field, is a combination of the two larger areas of study denoted in its name: linguistics and anthropology. According to Alessandro Duranti's *Linguistic Anthropology* (1997), the field is unique from those which compose it because of its interest in how speaking and communicative interaction – as social practices – come to reflect and shape large-scale sociocultural phenomena and habits of orientation within the world at large.

This interest can be seen in studies which illustrate how linguistic forms both influence and are influenced by thought. The most famous argument on the latter is put forth in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, outlined by Benjamin Lee Whorf's "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language" (1939) and "Science and Linguistics" (1940), among many other works compiled in his posthumous *Language, Thought, and Reality* (1956). Over the course of his work, Whorf states that linguistic structures, such as grammatical categories, influence habits of thought. In doing so, they shape ideas about and orientations to the world. Speakers of different languages may – as Whorf argues – have different orientations to space, time, and the world. Whorf's hypothesis is, however, not fully original. It fails to give credit to the work of Wilhelm

von Humbodlt, who found that “language is by no means a mere means of communication, but the mirror of the mind and of the world view of the speaker” (Koerner 1992, 179). Regardless, the conclusions are similar.

Beyond examining relations between linguistic structures and cognition, linguistic anthropologists explore how language structure and linguistic practices relate to social processes and issues of power. Take, for example, the way in which social order is maintained through the use of linguistic forms, as expressed by Susan Gal’s “Language, Gender, and Power: An Anthropological Review” (2001). According to Gal, in America, men are expected to speak their minds while women are expected to be seen but not heard. By speaking out, a woman is resisting a patriarchal social order and at the same time issuing a powerful critique of social theory. Alternatively, by keeping silent, women can be seen as either tacitly agreeing to their submission to more powerful men or quietly protesting that power dynamic. Either way, resistance to a dominant cultural order occurs only when devalued linguistic forms or practices – such as minority language, slang, and outspoken women – are celebrated despite their stigmatization. This allows for a proposition and embodiment of alternative models of the social world (Gal 2001). The alternative model, however, wouldn’t exist without a base model against which to be measured or reckoned. In order for there to be an alternative, there has to be an arbitrarily constructed “normal” – an idea outlined by Ruth Benedict in her 1934 book, *Patterns of Culture*. This idea of a base of normalcy creates an ethos of opposites – masculinity versus femininity, speaking out versus staying quiet, dominance versus submission – constructed and maintained by arbitrary cultural definitions. It is not just cultural definitions which are arbitrary, however. Language itself is arbitrary.

A linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. Ferdinand de Saussure, writing in “The Nature of the Linguistic Sign” (1916), defines these as the “signifier” and the “signified.” For Saussure, neither the signifier nor the signified exist outside of a language; their meanings are contained within the human consciousness. This means that there is no connection between linguistic signs and what they signify beyond what we as native learners and speakers have understood them to be. It is for this reason that language is significant: not because it means anything, but because it inherently does not. Language is significant because of what speech acts represent – a symbolic guide to cultural expression – rather than what is actually being said (Sapir, 1929). Furthermore, linguistic forms and how each person uses them also represents the social conduct with which we have been engrained. In Edward Sapir’s 1927 article “The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society,” the idea of social conduct is important because it is set up by society itself rather than by individuals. Thus, social conventions shape both speech acts and those who produce them. In this sense, “society” represents all the surroundings which influence how we think and, in turn, how we speak. Society is our background.

The effects of convention on language usage and production are also outlined in Whorf’s aforementioned “Science and Linguistics” (1940). According to Whorf, speakers’ classifications of the world relate to linguistic categories: “We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language” (Whorf 1940, 213). The most commonly referenced folk-example of this theory is that of the number of words for snow in “Eskimo,” relating to work published by Franz Boas in 1911. In reality, there is no “Eskimo” language. Boas’ research included words

belonging to either the Yupik or Inuit-Inupiaq branches, neither of which have any more lexical items for snow "types" than does English (Duranti 1997, 55-56). However, Boas' "general point that there might be a cultural motivation for the development of lexical distinctions" (1997, 56) is important. It suggests how distinctions between types of "things" are reflected and constrained by linguistic forms (e.g. the distinction between "drifting snow" and a "snowdrift").

Linguistic anthropology as a field of study, with its focus on speech and speech communities in the context of their society at large, seeks to prove how speech acts are affected by deeply-ingrained social conduct. Methodologically, this is accomplished by returning to our own background and using what we know to understand what we do not yet know. This relates to the point of comparison, opposites, and relativity. When we think about other languages, we do so by comparing the foreign to what we know: our own natively-acquired language and its relevant structures. This creates a base against which to compare. However, a language is nothing if you don't understand its context. As outlined by Clifford Geertz in his 1973 article "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," you can speak a language of a country, but without being part of the culture you will not understand its people because you are removed from the context. In order to understand this context, it is helpful to utilize the role of linguistic forms as symbolic guides to cultural forms to help further the study of cultural phenomena and interactions between human beings. According to Sapir's "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," you can only understand culture by understanding its linguistic symbols. By understanding language, both how it is spoken and how it is constructed, we can get to the bottom of ingrained social conduct in our area of interest.

This is especially pertinent in understanding the question of social identities. Language and identity shape one another, and as such the combination is well-studied in the field of

linguistic anthropology. Just as there exists a dichotomy between arbitrary perceptions of normalcy and difference, in the context of identity formation there exists a rift between native and foreign linguistic forms. This tension has been explored in the language ideologies literature (see Silverstein 1979, Irvine 2012). Woolard and Schieffelin's "Language Ideology" (1994) utilizes the example of the "one language/one people;" a movement to create an "imagined nation" formulated around a certain vernacular language rooted in the idea that a person's native language is inherently the most authentic and morally significant. This movement is not unique in its viewpoint. The imagined nation to which Woolard and Schieffelin are referring is not a nation in the sense of land and location, but in the sense of belonging to a group of people sharing a common thread. In this case, according to Errington's account of standard Indonesian language ideologies in *Shifting Languages* (1998), "language indicates nationality" (3). Through his research on the multiple registers used in different social situations in Javanese Indonesia, Errington noted that a linguistic form is most indicative of distinction when it has the greatest number of restrictions and the smallest number of regular speakers. In Javanese Indonesia, this rarely-used but ethno-pragmatically important linguistic register is High *Básá*, which confers status upon the speaker and associates them with a higher power. The importance of High Básá stems from the fact that its use is restricted to semi-public rituals and by those of high status, as opposed to the national "standard" language of *Bahasa Indonesia*.

This is representative of the difficulty of having one standard language represent an entire people: different aspects of society require different linguistic forms. As such, the language you speak (and how you speak it) determines who you are and what you do. This is especially prevalent in the context of non-native speakers of a language, who will inherently have some sort of "abnormal" accent affecting their speech. The identity surrounding what we call "accents" is

underlined in Asif Agha's "The Social Life of Cultural Value" (2003). Agha expresses that an accent works as an identifying label for a person, particularly in its association with perceived social class. An accent, like all other aspects of language, is arbitrary and inherently relational. Without knowledge of "normal," accent-free speech against which to evaluate "deviations," there can be no accent. As Agha explains, the term "accent" itself is a "folk-term," one that refers not to "a sound pattern alone, but a sound pattern linked to a framework of social identities. The social identity is recognized, indexically, as the identity of the speaker who produces the utterance in the instance, and described, metalinguistically, through the use of identifying labels" (Agha 2003, 191). However frowned-upon it may be to "speak with an accent," accented speech is an unavoidable product of multilingualism.

While multilingualism has been an everyday sociolinguistic fact in various places for various reasons – one of the most common of which is colonialism, which encouraged use of the linguistic form of the colonizer over that of the colonized (see Errington 2008; Cohn 1996) – globalization has increased its scale and scope. According to Chen, Martínez, and Bond in "Bicultural Identity, Bilingualism, and Psychological Adjustment in Multicultural Societies: Immigration-Based and Globalization-Based Acculturation" (2008), globalization has led to increased multilingualism and multiculturalism as a result of intensifying intercultural contact "manifested and explored in economic development, changes in lifestyles, and communication patterns" (804). Increased global mobility has dovetailed with the increased use of English as a general *lingua franca* of modernity that can be used by anyone anywhere in the world. However useful English is in the professional lives of immigrants, it is more useful to remember one's roots by maintaining use of their native tongue: the "real language" most "transparent to the true

self" (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, 40). It is this duality which creates a multicultural identity that defines the immigrant experience around the world.

B. (Im)migration, diaspora, and belonging

The ability of a person to create a multicultural and multilingual identity, which is so vital for immigrant groups, depends on a number of factors. One of these factors is the relatedness of linguistic forms. In Chen, Martínez, and Bond's 2008 study of immigrants living, working, or going to university in Hong Kong, it was found that the most acculturated individuals were those whose native languages were most similar to Cantonese, the dialect of Chinese spoken in Hong Kong. These immigrants were largely from Mainland China and spoke Mandarin. Since Mandarin and Cantonese are both "dialects" of "Chinese," the linguistic and cultural forms of the two are assumed to resemble one another. On the other hand, Filipino domestic workers living in Hong Kong were much less bicultural. Although each domestic worker spoke English in addition to their native Tagalog, Cantonese presented an entirely new challenge. In addition, as domestic workers, these immigrants were not given the chance to truly interact with Hong Kong natives and make contextual connections using Cantonese. In short, Mainland Chinese immigrants felt that they belonged in Hong Kong, while Filipino domestic workers did not. These politics of belonging are especially prevalent in immigrant communities because of the obvious difference between belonging to a "home" versus a "host" linguistic community but can be applied to any group. The importance lies not in the identity of the people themselves, but in their individual identifications with the languages they speak.

In order for a language (or linguistic code) to serve as an anchor of identity for a community, the code must be conventionally understood and shared among members of that

community. The conventionalization of linguistic registers or codes in communities which were too large for every member to have contact with one another was – as explained by Benedict Anderson in his 1983 book, *Imagined Communities* – historically enabled by print capitalism. Print capitalism revolutionized language in a number of ways. It enabled speakers of different languages to understand each other's ideas in print, created a fixity of form that could be reproduced at any time and subsequently a stabilization of language, and pushed out smaller vernacular dialects to make more room for the generalized main language in the public sphere. This process both creates and is created by culture. Print capitalism can bring together widespread populations to create a coherent collective just as well as it can be created by a preexisting community looking to cement its legitimacy via the development of a fixed language. This idea of a standard linguistic form, the creation and creator of identity, is "necessary for objective, context-free, 'modern' modes of discourse and thought" (Errington 1998, 62).

In this sense, what we call "language" is more than just syntax and grammar. It requires context; as does its understanding. Hence, speakers who have the ability to speak multiple languages also have the ability to select the correct "language mode" for the context in which they are speaking. This knowledge is socialized over time, reflecting how multilingual speakers come to understand contexts of appropriateness for their speech registers or codes. This phenomenon is known as code-switching. Penelope Gardner-Chloros's book on this topic, aptly named *Code Switching* (2009), discusses this phenomenon in combination with other aspects of appropriate language use. To do so, she presents Myers-Scotton's "Markedness Model" (1983), which explains that every situation where language is used will have an idea of what linguistic form is expected to be used. The linguistic form which is expected or presupposed in certain contexts is "unmarked" and unremarkable, insofar as it is the most "rational" choice for the

speech act. While language selection is presented as a rational choice to be made by the speaker on a case-by-case basis, it is actually governed by strict linguistic laws that are intuitive and unexplainable. This returns us to the idea of language influencing thought. After all, language choice, like all other cultural behavior, is patterned "unconsciously" in society (Sapir 1927).

The unconscious performance of cultural forms applies to linguistic acts as well as to expressions of identity. One concrete example of a social interaction relating to the expression of identity can be seen in Verne A. Dusenbery's 1995 article "The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience Beyond Punjab." Dusenbery's work refers to an occurrence of migration in the early 20^{th-}century in which a large number of Sikhs from the Punjab state of India emigrated to other locations: a migratory event that is extremely difficult to label. and makes the point that it is difficult to label the migration. The issue is that the Punjab is filled with people of numerous confusing identities who don't fit into any clear-cut categorizations. It is possible to classify them according to religious affiliation, language, or statehood, but impossible to know with which category they will most strongly identify and to which they will most vehemently want to belong. This example is also complicated by the colonial past of India. During the colonial era in India, British officials defined Indian citizens by occupation (caste) and regional affiliation for administrative purposes. This policy separated Sikhs from one another: even if two people living in different areas and working different jobs practiced the same religion, they were categorically different according to the British government. By this metric, a Sikh was defined by their physical location before their religious affiliation. However, in the diaspora, it makes more sense for a person to have an affiliation with a religion that can follow them to their new home. In addition, a number of Sikhs do not see India as their homeland and have called for the creation of a Sikh state, Khalistan, to officially delineate Sikh territory from Muslim Pakistan and Hindu

India (Dusenbery 1995). For Sikhs living in the diaspora, having a definitive state would legitimate their experience of membership in the Sikh nation.

The idea of legitimation of a nation as a collection of people rather than as an area of land with distinct and fixed (but ultimately elastic) borders can be understood by Anderson's definition of "imagined communities." According to Anderson, a nation "is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1983, 6). A nation can only exist as a concrete construction so long as every member has a physical connection with one another in addition to the inherent similarities of identity which they must have to be part of the same community. Any nation larger than this must be imagined. In an imagined community, every member of a nation feels connected to one another despite the fact that they will never meet (Anderson, 1983). Both types of nation are imagined as sovereign and as communities, but only an imagined community has the potential for unlimited growth. In addition, imagined nations have the capacity to be defined by actors outside of the community. This is relevant in the context of colonialism, in which colonized people were arbitrarily defined by outside colonizers who made no attempt to gain a contextual understanding of their identity. The connection between nationalism and colonialism is explored in Peter van der Veer's 1995 chapter "The Diasporic Imagination." According to van der Veer, nationalism first became important in the American and French revolutions in the 1700s. A "product of European colonial expansion" (2-3), nationalism was defined by European colonization for both the colonizers and the colonized.

However, colonialism does not treat all nationalities equally. van der Veer discusses this phenomenon using the example of Indian emigrants. Although India spent decades under British rule and was, however involuntarily, a member of the British Empire, Indians have issues

integrating into the British community if they choose to move to Great Britain due to racism. In short, Indian identity is forcibly changed once a person decides to move outside of their homeland. As such, “diaspora and the nation have become inextricably intertwined” (Dusenbery 1995, 17). This ties back into the politics of belonging: specifically, in the context of who is allowed to belong in a certain community. Diasporic communities cement themselves as either permanent or transient on the basis of their host country’s acceptance or rejection of their belonging. Regardless of factors such as length of residence in a nation, only those who have been given the capacity to put down roots in a place can be said to “belong.” This ability to put down roots is governed by entirely by discrimination and creates two complementary nations: those who are marginalized and those who cause the marginalization of others (van der Veer, 1995). Unfortunately for immigrants, marginalization usually comes from both sides in a diasporic community. In an attempt to simultaneously uphold native cultural values and practices and learn to embrace the cultural of their host nation, immigrants are always working on striking a balance in their lives.

C. South Asians in the United States

George P. Alexander’s 1996 doctoral dissertation, “Social Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Keralite and Gujarati Indians Living in Los Angeles,” describes children of Indian immigrants living in the United States as those who “may live the life of both Indians and Americans.” (45) by creatung a new amalgam identity that allows them to serve as liaisons between their “home” and “host” sociocultural formations. This position requires a number of responsibilities from immigrant children. Beyond acting as a liaison between the public and private spheres, they must teach their parents the cultural and linguistic forms of their new home,

acting as literal and figurative translators throughout their lives. Moreover, they are expected to climb the social ladder for their parents (Alexander 1996). In the specific experience of immigrants from the Indian state of Gujarat living in the United States, this desire to better oneself comes in the form of being one's own boss. It is for this reason that so many Gujarati-Americans own their own businesses: their kindedness is related to their "projected propensity" (Kockelman 2012, 72) toward motel and hotel ownership, but also toward running franchises of stores such as Dunkin' Donuts and 7-Eleven. According to Govind Bhakta's 2002 book, *Patels: A Gujarati Community History in the United States*, Gujaratis became their own bosses in the diaspora in order to eschew the discrimination that they had experienced in attempting to work corporate jobs. This experience is inherently Gujarati. In the experience of immigrants from the Indian state of Kerala, which Alexander uses as a comparison, the prestige of being highly educated is more important than that of being one's own boss. As such, more Keralites than Gujaratis go on to become academics, doctors, and lawyers.

For most immigrant communities, regional differences give way to national identity in the diaspora. Indians, however, are special. Hemalatha Ganapathy-Coleman's 2013 article, "Raising "Authentic" Indian Children in the United States: Dynamism in the Ethnotheories of Immigrant Hindu Parents" makes this distinction on the basis that Indian immigrants maintain not only their national identity upon immigration, but also their regional affiliations. At the same time, they maintain a larger Indian identity based on cultural consumption and traditions as well as the stresses of being a "model minority" group. The idea of the "model minority" is an expectation of economic success and ability to assimilate at a higher-than-average rate when compared to other immigrant groups. It is also an expectation that immigrants will be able to maintain their own native cultural expression in private while at the same time adhering to

American cultural standards, such as Western ideals of beauty, in public. Overall, it is an unfair expectation and a plague which follows all Indian-Americans in their interactions with their host country but should not be conflated with the pressures that Indian immigrant parents put on their Indian-American children. Indeed, Ganapathy-Coleman explains that, while Indian immigrants are well-to-do and seemingly well-assimilated in America, they maintain an image of their cultural identity both inside their homes and by forcing their children to participate in Indian cultural activities.

By imbuing the entirety of the private sphere with "Indianness," Indian immigrant parents fill their children's lives with a cultural importance that is often taken for granted (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013). While children of Indian immigrants may not understand the importance of the prevalence of native cultural forms in their private homes and lives, they can glean a lot of information about the regional and national traditions of their parents from the way they are raised (Alexander 1996). In addition, children of immigrants learn to better understand their parent's ideology. Gujaratis, for example, are very traditional. They are insistent upon maintaining caste rules and arranged marriages, even in the United States, and place a lot of importance on traditional kinship networks. This is most obviously expressed in the intergenerational dissemination of the Gujarati language, which is a symbol of attachment to Indian national belonging.[1] Marianne Hundt and Adina Staicov's 2018 article, "Identity in the London Indian Diaspora: Towards the Quantification of Qualitative Data," while it does not discuss South Asians in the United States, uses the numbers of Gujarati immigrants who teach their children their native tongue as a way to quantitatively measure "Indian identity." However, on the topic of native language, it cannot truly be said that English is foreign to South Asia.

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[1] For an in-depth discussion of the Gujarati language and its history, see Colin P. Masica, *The Indo-Aryan Languages*. Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Colin Masica's *The Indo-Aryan Language* (1991) explains that English is, in a way, indigenized in the region as a result of years of British colonial rule.

D. (South) Asian-American Studies

In general, I have found that (South) Asian-American Studies as an academic track has a number of downfalls. Firstly, there are no universities (that I know of) in the United States which offer a South-Asian-American Studies program. A large number of institutions offer Asian Studies, which disproportionately teach classes on East Asia and have professors of East Asian descent. In these programs, all of South Asia is relegated to one subcategory within the larger sphere of Asian Studies. A smaller number of institutions offer South Asian Studies, which tend to focus on the region but not as it relates to its diasporic communities. Even rarer is Asian-American Studies. At the University of Pennsylvania, Asian-American Studies is an interdisciplinary program which offers a minor but no major. This program too is disproportionately focused on East Asian cultural and linguistic forms. Focus on East Asia over South Asia is prevalent not only at the university level, but also at the institutional level. The larger association for Asian-American studies, AAAS, was founded in 1979 to focus on large-scale goals for the field and its public perception rather than on specific target areas of study. Their website provides a history of the organization as well as an informational video to introduce visitors to the organization and its aims. In the AAAS video overview, as in the association as a whole, there is a clear bias towards East Asia. South Asia is grouped together as an amalgam, and most of the academics interviewed are East Asian. Interestingly enough, these professors do not note this lack of diversity when they are talking about the importance of representation of Asian culture in academia.

In the University of Pennsylvania's South Asian Studies Department, the largest amount of focus is placed on language learning. The department offers more languages than any other in the country – ranging from the modern official languages of India to ancient languages such as Sanskrit and Pali – but focuses more on learning the culture through the language than it does on the actual connection between the two. These courses also do not discuss South-Asian-America: only South Asia. This semester, the department offers one class relating to the Americas: SAST 166, "Forgotten Asians of the Americas". To be fair, there are not a lot of course options outside language learning in general. This is a result of the size of the department. There are only five current South Asian Studies majors, many of whom also complete a dual major. In addition to South Asian Studies, Penn also offers an East Asian Languages and Civilizations department, which offers majors and minors, and an Asian-American Studies interdisciplinary program, which only offers a minor. The Asian-American Studies program is holding ten classes this semester, three of which are cross-listed with the South Asian Studies department and therefore deal with South-Asian-American topics. Much like the focus of AAAS in general, the focus of Asian American Studies at Penn is clearly skewed towards East Asia in terms of culture, South Asia in terms of language, and lacking on the story of these nations coming to America on all accounts.

Penn does not offer any courses at all relating to the (South) Asian-American Immigrant experience. A number of courses on migration are offered this semester, but all are in context of more specific topics. None of these classes appear to focus on language and (im)migration, so I believe that my work is definitely filling a gap at the undergraduate level.

IV. Theoretical Framework

The main takeaway from my research is that cultural forms exist as a base from which all other aspects of life stem. In terms of language, culture determines what language is spoken, how it is used, and how it changes from situation to situation. To paraphrase the point made by de Saussure (1916), it is culture which gives language value, for signs and their signifiers have no meaning outside of those we have been taught to assign them. This is important to my research of a second-generation immigrant because it brings light to my informant's relationships with the languages she speaks as well as what is said in those languages. My informant's experience relates to the point outlined by Anderson (1983) that use of language cements a person to their community. Having been raised in the culture but not the country of her parents, by learning to use Hindi, Gujarati, and Marathi she is able to maintain a connection to a larger community of Indians both in India and in its diaspora. Personally, I am interested in exploring the dichotomy of performing Indian identity while existing in a state of American cultural codes and English language, the latter of which were deemed culturally unimportant and thus were barred from the private sphere.

In terms of identity, culture determines who feels a sense of belonging and how that sense of belonging is performed in everyday life. It is the question of identity which creates the differentiation between "home" and "host" cultural forms. According to Chen, Martínez, and Bond (2008), even immigrants with the highest level of acculturation maintains a sense of belonging to their native culture. An immigrant interviewed by the authors stated that ''You start building a home in one place within one culture . . . but do not complete it. Then you continue to build your home within another culture . . . At the end, you have different pieces of home in different places. You can never put them together, because they may contradict or conflict with one another'' (2008, 829). I am interested in exploring this contradiction and conflict in my

informant's experience as a second-generation immigrant. Technically, given that she was born and raised in America, my informant should consider America – rather than India – her "home." However, she was not raised to feel a sense of belonging to American cultural identity. Although she has adapted to her American surroundings fairly effectively over the course of her life, she identifies more strongly with the "Indianness" of her upbringing.

All of my research for this project, in some capacity, comments on the importance of culture. Culture is the basis of my project because it is the basis of human experience: it represents a person's upbringing, determines what they will deem important, and explains any and all actions. My research, through the use of a single informant, will dive deeply into her cultural expressions and explain how she navigates the divide between them.

V. Research Methods and Methodology

My research is based on a series of semi-structured ethnographic interviews with one informant based on the following topics: background, definitions and word associations, assimilation, language, culture, and separation and togetherness. All interviews occurred in coffee shops in Philadelphia, each an individual event. In this sense, an event can be defined as "a distinguishable happening, one with some pattern or theme that sets it off from others, and one that involves changes taking place within a delimited amount of time" (Griffin 1993, 1096). In the case of my interviews, each session started with my informant and I meeting and purchasing coffee. Next, we sat down and started the recording. I started each session with an explanation of the topic on which I was intending to focus to give my informant a general understanding of where the interview would lead. The interviews then turned to pre-determined questions – which I had written but not shown to my informant in advance – that my informant would answer and

comment upon. The session ended when all questions – including those that came up naturally during the interview – were answered.

Each topic, in addition to serving a specific informational purpose, reflects different outcomes of the method of direct observation. Firstly, on the topic of background, it must be noted that this research is only possible because of the relationship I have with my informant. Having known her for more than seven years, I have a wealth of knowledge that one can only gain from years of unobtrusive observation. In fact, it is this collection of observations of a close friend over years which inspired me to embark on this research. Adding direct observations in the form of semi-structured interviews only serves to deepen my understanding of my informant's specific second-generation immigrant experience. Secondly, definitions and word associations. By asking my informant about her engagement with terms such as "biculturalism" and "assimilation," I ask her to construct operational definitions of terms which, in the context of theory, are simply conceptual (Bernard 2011). This implores her to think more deeply about how she personally engages with these concepts, specifies the situations in which she feels attachment to them, and allows me to understand them from a phenomenological point of view (Bernard, 2011).

The next topic, assimilation, deepens the operational definition and phenomenology of the term by rooting it an understanding of its effect on her everyday experience. Assimilation is also an important topic to consider because it is a concept which is measured at the ordinal level: it can be tracked in different times, spaces, and places throughout my informant's lifetime as a consistent marker (Bernard 2011). Language and culture, while topically distinct, work together with one another from the standpoint of informing research. They are both nominal concepts which are not mutually exclusive but are observable (Bernard 2011). In other words, there exists

clear distinctions between the situations in which my informant speaks a certain language or performs a certain cultural form. Finally, the topic of separation and togetherness explores all the prior topics in conjunction (and sometimes disjunction) with one another. It asks my informant to not only understand her own experiences, but to compare them against one another in an attempt to solidify the relationship between, for example, her cultural and linguistic identities. My project is certainly focused on depth rather than breadth of knowledge, but I believe that this approach provides myself as a researcher the unique opportunity to deeply root the theory I have read in the context of a human experience.

While it is not typical to rely upon a single informant for research of this nature, there are a number of famous anthropological works which utilize the single-informant approach. One example of this is *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place*, by Anna Tsing (1993). Tsing's book explores the marginality of the Indonesian Meratus Dayaks people: their experience of existing outside of Indonesian society and western society and gendered visions of either world. This research is informed by the experience of one woman, Uma Adang, who immediately captivated the author. Uma Adang let Tsing follow her in her everyday life, which provided the author with a much deeper understanding of the region and the cultural and gender-based marginality that Uma Adang experiences as a resident of it. The research of Indonesian Meratus Dayaks people turned into a friendship between two women – neither of whom were expected to represent their respective cultural forms – who created for themselves a space of personal and cross-cultural intersection where they could most accurately understand one another's experiences (Tsing 1993).

Another example of a book with a single-informant ethnographic process is João Biehl's *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (2005). *Vita,* the book, explores Vita, the town, a

community of socially marginalized and socially abandoned residents who live far below the poverty line and are all disabled in some capacity. While Vita is known throughout Brazil, it does not exist on any map. In the book, Biehl describes Vita as a human wasteland, the effects of which are expressed in Catarina, the sole informant for the book. While the author had not intended on carrying out a single-person ethnography when planning his research, he was so drawn in by the story and demeanor of Catarina that he chose to use her as an aide in more deeply exploring the effects that life in Vita had on its residents (Biehl 2005). Catarina does not represent Vita, but she is a shining example of what its residents had been forced to leave behind in order to take up new residence there: financial stability, a family, and their good health, to name a few.

My project, unlike those that resulted in the publication of *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen* or *Vita*, began with the idea of deeply exploring the cultural connections present in a single informant. However, the result is the same in that there is no expectation that my informant is in any capacity representative of any of her identities. Rather, like Tsing and Biehl, I want to more deeply understand the effects of my research questions as they pertain to the real-life experiences of a particular person with whom I have curated a close and meaningful relationship.

VI. Presentation of Data and Analysis

At some points, the statements made by my informant fall in line with more fully-fledged research of larger populations regarding the same topics. At other points, however, my informant's experience is incongruous with larger data. In either case, there is no correct or incorrect way to experience being American, being Indian, being a second-generation immigrant,

or being bicultural. The only true story I can convey, due to the limits of my research, is that of my informant. The fact that her experience does not match exactly those outlined by prior academic works makes the research more interesting and serves to prove that she is not representative of her culture as a whole. She can only represent her personal lived experience; the same can be said for any published academic work. This presentation of data will follow the same general topical outline as the interviews which informed them, focusing on the following six topics: background, definitions and word associations, assimilation, language, culture, and separation and togetherness. Each section will include direct interview information from my informant, both in the form of direct quotations and paraphrasing, as well as published research that correlates to the same topic. Discussions of differences between information from interviews and published research will be provided when appropriate.

A. Background

This section asks general questions about my informant's upbringing and family life to aid me in understanding her specific experience of growing up between two cultures. My informant requested that her real name be changed in order to protect her privacy, so for the purposes of this research I will refer to her by a pseudonym, Priya Patel. Priya grew up in a small town in New Jersey with her mother and father, both of whom immigrated to the United States from India in the 1990s, albeit from different states. Her father hails from the state of Maharashtra and her mother from Gujarat: two states which border one another on the western coast of the Indian subcontinent but have entirely different linguistic and cultural histories. My initial interview with Priya was focused less on the specifics of her background and upbringing and more on her feelings towards the effects of that upbringing over the course of her lifetime.

This can be seen in the reality of growing up in a household where the primary concern was maintenance of a connection to Indian roots. Strict focus on performing Indian ways of life left no room to learn American customs, which manifested itself in the linguistic and cultural traditions of Priya's home life:

> I grew up speaking Gujarati and Hindi and my dad speaks Marathi. So, I grew up speaking those and we always had Indian TV playing and my parents tried as much as they could to teach me about like Hinduism, but at the same time, because I grew up surrounded by so much Indian culture, I wasn't really in touch with like American culture. So, for example, I went to ESL [English as a Second Language: a program which helps students to learn English well enough to attend school in the language] until second grade despite being born and brought up here because I just could not speak English because we didn't speak it in my house. So that was a challenge growing up, and it kind of made me a little bit like more self-conscious about myself and I had to… I felt like I had to work harder to learn about American culture than my peers.

In short, Priya was a stranger to the cultural forms of the land in which she had been born and raised. This caused her to feel like an outsider. While Priya grew up with a number of Bangladeshi and Hispanic friends, there was hardly anyone else in school who experienced an Indian upbringing the way that she had. As such, it was difficult to relate to her peer's interests and experiences. She remembers "the little tiny things that make you feel apart from the rest of your peers," such as not being able to contribute to conversations about "the newest episode of Hannah Montana or things like that." Rather, Priya consumed Indian media as a child, barred from anything that would cause her "to become American" in the eyes of her parents. This restriction is in no way abnormal for relationships between Indian immigrant parents and their children, particularly their daughters, whom they want to "shield…from "American" influences" (Alexander 1996, 108). Furthermore, Indian immigrants are defined by their desire to "recreat[e] an idealized Indian and Hindu ethos" inside their homes (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013, 365). As

Priya knows well, this is accomplished by forcing their children to participate in Indian cultural activities, such as watching Indian television, going to the temple, and eating Indian food. (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013). However, despite Priya's parents' insistence on maintaining Indian culture in the home, they have become more lenient and accepting of American custom over the years:

> Even though your parents are trying to like instill Indian values, they're still somewhat American. They have definitely gotten more Americanized I feel as I've gotten older, but I think that might have to do with me kind of like shoving American culture in their face and just letting them know like this is how people do things in this country and like just because it's different it's not bad… So, they just think my friends do things wrong, but I think they like kind of understand more [now than before].

The duality of the Indian-American immigrant experience creates "a peculiar segment" of society who are "unlike the American educated children, but somehow not totally Indian either" (Alexander 1996, 12). These children are expected to comport themselves in a manner which is wholly Indian at home and wholly American in the public sphere. As can be seen in Priya's upbringing, the curation of an Indian identity is accomplished through the exclusive use of Indian vernacular languages in the house. In addition to providing a window into Indian cultural expression as a whole, use of regional vernaculars allows for the maintenance of a more specific connection to a regional homeland. The importance of this connection can only be expressed in numbers: ninety-four percent of the Gujarati population as a whole would deem their Gujarati speaking skills as "fair to excellent." More specifically relevant to this example, eighty-two percent of the children of Gujarati immigrants self-report similar ability to speak their parents' language (Bhakta 2002, 80). The fact that Indians are able to maintain not only their national identity – but also their regional identity – upon immigration makes them unique as a minority

group (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013). However, this distinction is lost quickly in the second generation. While Priya "just see[s] [herself] as Indian," her parents primarily identify with their regional homeland:

> I think I just feel Indian honestly… my mom will identify as Gujarati and my dad will identify as like Maharashtan and then they'll be like: 'Oh we're Indian.' But like the first thing, you know, if my mom meets like a fellow Indian person one of like the first questions is like: 'Oh what part of India are you from?' Same way like with my dad, so they kind of look for that and they'll be like, 'Oh, you know, like I'm also from here. I'm also like Maharashtan.' And then they'll identify as like their region first as opposed to Indian.

While no points of universality may be raised by this study, Priya's upbringing seems to match those experienced by other children of Indian immigrants as described in the referenced literature. The method of raising a child in a culture of a homeland rather than a host country offers the children of immigrants an exclusive insight into their parents' world. In addition, it gives them a stronger sense of identity with their parents' nation and a greater appreciation for the meaning behind their biculturality.

B. Word Associations and Definitions

The second topic serves the purpose of comparing my informant's experience-driven definitions of certain important terms to standard definitions of the same. This serves the dual purpose of familiarizing her with the terms and getting her to think about how she engages with them in everyday life, pulling them out of theory and into the context of an actual human experience. For example, the Oxford Dictionaries definition of "multilingual," as a noun meaning "in or using several languages," is phenomenologically empty. On the other hand, Priya's definition of multilingualism encapsulates her personal experience of living a multilingual lifestyle. For this reason, her definition – "a person who speaks more than one

language" – purposefully separates the ability to speak a language from the ability to read or write in it. Despite the fact that Priya speaks four languages – Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, and English – fluently, she is only literate in English. She goes on to clarify:

> I don't really count reading and writing because I can't read or write in any other language but English, but I speak other languages. So that's that… it's not important for me to learn how to read and write in any other language but English because I'm probably not going to live elsewhere for like a long period of time. And if I ever do travel to India, they have I like my family can translate for me or they have like whatever it is like written in English underneath usually… I don't really think [I feel left out of Indian culture]… maybe like when it comes to reading and writing I guess like the only thing I can think of is like sometimes I can't read my dad's WhatsApp forwards, which isn't really like the worst thing in the world because they're dumb jokes anyway, but I feel like the culture is pretty ingrained in me.

In short, literacy is not an issue which comes up in her non-English-speaking life. This is a result of the different spheres in which she uses each language. Priya has completed all of her schooling in English, so it is necessary for her to be literate. However, in the context of the home or other cultural spheres, such as her Hindu temple, there are no situations in which literacy would be necessary. This split is common amongst other children of Gujarati immigrants. While eighty-two percent of these children can speak the Gujarati language, seventy-nine percent mark their literacy abilities as "very little or not at all" (Bhakta 2002, 80). This is a result of the fact that Gujarati, while used often amongst immigrant families, is only prevalent in the home and at social events.

The notion of separate spheres affecting how a person acts and reacts extends into the discussion of biculturalism. Priya notes that she feels "bicultural or multicultural just because there is like part of [her] that is, you know, very American in how [she] interact[s] with people who aren't Indian." She compares these interactions to those with family or members of her

temple, stating that "[she] act[s] differently in that there's like a different set of norms and rules and social traditions." Priya identifies strongly with both of her cultures, albeit in different situations. This "high identification with both cultures" defines biculturalism (Chen, Martínez, and Bond 2008, 805), but does not go as far as to explain the distinct sets of cultural norms which must be mastered in order to attain biculturality. In other words, it is not enough to identify with cultural forms: one must understand how to comport themselves in everyday life according to different societal expectations in order to truly balance themselves between cultures. Priya explains this divergence in culturally appropriate behavior using the example of wedding etiquette:

> A typical American wedding you have like sit-down dinners, there's like RSVPs and like everyone knows like the bride and groom and like everyone knows like who the guests are. So, like with Indian weddings, it's a little different because you can if you invite one person to your wedding, you're basically inviting the entire family. And like if people show up out of the blue at your wedding uninvited, that's considered like fine, but just little cultural differences like that.

In short, biculturality entails the ability of a person to "perform" two different cultural forms effectively. From the standpoint of anthropological research, I was most interested in Priya's reaction to the term "performing culture." Her association focused on performance in a literal sense: Indian dance teams at her university, wedding performances, and Bollywood musical numbers. In her eyes, Priya "did not think that it could be like a religious or like actually a cultural thing." Rather, she equates her performance of culture with assimilation, which by her account is the act of "being involved in whatever culture or community you're living in or whatever country's culture and adapting to that and kind of being part of those traditions and … not forgetting your own." This definition is very different from that which sees assimilation as

"the process by which the characteristics of members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another" (Brown and Bean 2006). However, it does match the idea that "you understand yourself only when you know your origins" (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013, 367).

Priya sees her cultural identities as distinct and has throughout her whole life: there is no sense of convergence. This viewpoint is common amongst Indians as an immigrant community. While Indian immigrants are generally perceived as well-to-do and seemingly well-assimilated in America, they maintain an image of their native culture inside their homes. This creates a unique dual identity: one which allows them to the "live the life of both Indians and Americans." (Alexander 1996, 45). Priya's experience follows this same pattern. She feels firstly Indian and secondly American, having been raised in the former cultural form and having had to assimilate to the latter. In addition, because Indian cultural forms were always deemed more important in her private and family life, they maintain their personal importance in her life even today. In contrast, American culture is a product of the public sphere, and as such Priya sees it as less influential to her identity.

C. Assimilation

On the topic of assimilation specifically, it is important to note that Priya's "cultures" are bounded collectives within a broader ontology that shapes her "representations of the world" (encoded in language and embodied in cultural forms) and how they come to shape her sense of "residence in the world" (Kockelman 2012, 96). The expectation of being Indian first and Indian above all else was ingrained in her by her parents, for whom tradition was a vital and continuing lesson. Priya explained that her parents were "really like focused on the Indian aspect of [her] upbringing" and instilling in her Indian traditions. In short, Priya was raised with a propensity to

attach herself to Indian before American identity. Any American cultural forms she learned were learned outside the house, and only after years of having their daughter accumulate American cultural knowledge did her parents allow any American cultural forms to infiltrate the private sphere. Now that Priya is older, she notices “a bit more American culture” in the home. However, the traditions of Indian life – doing things “The Indian way” – are still very much maintained:

> It's still pretty much the same in my house in terms of culture where we still speak in Gujarati. We’ll eat Indian food in the house, you know, pray twice a day, but the difference I think I brought that in because you know, like one going to school in America and like having American friends and being exposed to culture. I definitely brought that home. So, I think because I threw like American culture kind of at them, they were forced to adapt because otherwise they literally would not understand me as a person.

This idea of Priya’s parents allowing new cultural forms into their home in order to understand her as a person show their attempt towards bridging a cultural gap. Previously, it was the misunderstanding of her traditional parents which hindered Priya’s assimilation. However, more broadly, barriers to assimilation are more likely to be seen on a systemic scale than on a personal level. One example of a systemic impediment to assimilation is racism, both by itself and in conjunction with xenophobia. This has forced assimilation models to “place new stress on institutional roles and the contingent nature of ethnic identification in order” to attain a fuller, more modern picture of the issues that immigrants face in their host country” (Brown and Bean 2006). Another consideration is socioeconomic status, although Gujarati immigrants do not face the full force of these issues as a result of their traditional focus on kinship networks and projective propensity to exhibit high earnings (Alexander 1996). The high socioeconomic status of Gujaratis informs how they have traditionally gone about assimilating into the United States.

While Priya's parents work in the private sphere, her mother in a hospital system and her father in a casino, most Gujarati immigrants desire to own their own businesses to avoid discrimination that restricts them from gaining social capital and climbing the social ladder (Alexander 1996).

> [The] first generation, like when they come in, they don't really have like the same opportunities that you know, their kids are going to have. They didn't get a college education and stuff like that. So, it wouldn't really be easy for these parents to work in like a corporate field or some company. So, they end up self-starting their own business and it's often like a liquor store or you know, like a 7-Eleven or whatever. The stereotype is Dunkin Donuts… [My parents] have experienced like they haven't been promoted as quickly as their peers but that might be because they came in from a different country and like they have a degree that's not American. I don't think it's actively because "Oh, we're not going to give you a promotion because you're not you don't fit in."

Priya's parents are adamant about her working for someone else and having the chance to enhance her social capital through advancement in a traditional, corporate setting. It is unclear whether this is a result of her being raised in America or just an ideology of her parents that diverges from the Gujarati norm. It could be a result of her parents wanting her to assimilate, a desire that Priya sees more from her mother's Gujarati side of the family than her father's Maharashtrian relatives. Priya describes her father's half of the family as "traditional" and "conservative" people who "cling to their Indian lifestyles." On the other hand, she has noticed that family members on her mother's side "want to be American" and "want to try to adapt." According to the theory of "Identificational Assimilation" (Brown and Bean 2006), the Gujarati way is that which speeds up assimilation, while the Maharashtrian method slows it down. This theory states that, "assimilation is slowed down by a strengthening of racial and ethnic identification driven by discrimination, reliance on racial/ethnic networks to achieve success, and/or expressive, symbolic, or individual needs" (Brown and Bean 2006). Priya's parents want

her to make her own place in the world and climb the corporate ladder on her own merit, not to join the ranks of Indian motel and hotel owners.

Priya's parents stress success, but never at the expense of forgetting her roots. The success of this ideology can be seen in Priya's experience of multilingualism. It is imperative to her identity to her that she speaks Gujarati because it connects her to her family and her past. Even Hindi, which she learned by watching television with her parents and reading the subtitles, feels culturally significant. While she has less connection to Marathi than to Gujarati, it is still the language of her father and his regional home. This all exists in stark contrast to her idea of English. When I asked her about her reactions to the language that she uses every day in every aspect of her public life, she couldn't find an answer for her entirely neutral feelings. She remarked that "it's just a language [she] speak[s], you know to survive in America." English holds no cultural importance to Priya because it is a product of a secondary identity that does not connect to her background in any way.

D. Language

The fourth topic can encompass a number of different aspects of Priya's experience. There are the languages spoken in a literal sense, how they reinvent themselves in different situations, and how the language of description manifests itself in everyday life. All represent distinct aspects of Priya's sense of identity and belonging. These identities both inform and are informed by language use. After all, they are simply labels, and labels are simply language. For example, Priya is not simply "Indian:" she can't be tied to such a broad identity without understanding of the nuances of her cultural heritage. She is also Gujarati and Maharashtrian and Hindu and a second-generation immigrant. She is also an example of a deviation from the norm.

She is “other” and “foreign” and “scary” and “strange.” These are not identities which Priya assigns to herself consciously. Rather, they are notions of the self which become associated with immigrant communities based on the idea that there exists a “center” to which they do not belong and a majority identity of which they are not a part (Bhatia 2007). These labels evoke a feeling of loneliness and dissociation amongst minority communities.

This figurative language of description manifests itself differently in diverse contexts, just as literal speech does. Manifestations of the former depend entirely on the speaker, whereas the latter depends on both the speaker and the listener(s). Priya was able to relate this topic to a personal story from high school. In her sophomore year, another student commented on a pimple between her eyebrows, remarking “I thought that you were supposed to take the dot off before you leave the temple.” The student was himself a second-generation immigrant, albeit from Bangladesh rather than India and Muslim rather than Hindu. Although the cultures are “pretty similar” according to Priya, the comment represented a level of insensitivity against an apparent symbol of her “Indianness.” The student was referring to a *bindi*, “a decorative mark worn in the middle of the forehead by Indian women, especially Hindus” (Oxford Dictionary). The *bindi* is a “mark of difference” – when pointed out, it becomes prevalent as a label of otherness (Bhatia 2007). When embraced by a member of its associated culture, however, a mark of difference is a presentation of pride. Since the inappropriate comment from her classmate, Priya has embraced her “bindi zit” and reclaimed the label once used to insult her.

Priya also reclaims her identity with literal language use, specifically in context of the phenomenon of code switching. Priya’s experience vastly diverges from published accounts of code-switching because she has a metapragmatic awareness of exactly when and why she changes her language use (both within one language and between two languages). In simpler

terms, she understands exactly when and why she switches between multiple languages and/or multiple expressions of the same language:

> I find myself like want to speaking English with my parents, I won't be speaking how I sound right now. I won't be speaking if I was talking to like another person who was born and raised in America. I find might like I slow down I don't speak as fast as I normally do and I do this thing where like my accent suddenly flips and becomes like Indian out of nowhere and I found myself enunciating words like more but so it's definitely more cultural than the language itself… So I do that kind of with my parents like switching back and forth between languages and if anything that kind of like thickens the accent - the non-existent Indian accent that I never had - but it thickens it and I think it makes it easier for them to understand what I'm saying to you because there are like some words that I would use in Gujarati either that like they just don't exist in English like so it's hard for me to explain myself all the time like when speaking English to my parents for words that don't translate... there are just no words in the English language.

Priya's code switching should be an unconscious phono-lexico-grammatical choice of which she is not aware. In fact, she was not aware of it until her freshman year of college, when her roommate pointed out that her accent changes when she is speaking with her mother, even if the conversation was conducted entirely in English. In my observation, the most noticeable change in this situation is Priya's intonation. When she speaks to her parents, whether in English or Gujarati, after the conversation her inflection becomes less "American" and more "Indian." Having observed the speaking patterns of both Priya's parents, it is easy to see how she mirrors her parents' speech and accent and how the British English they learned in India exists in contrast to the American English their daughter was taught in the American school system. This idea of "speaking the same language" must be understood in both a figurative and literal sense to be understood at all.

Indeed, according to Edward Sapir, "Language is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such" (1929, 166). Literally, this means that those who speak the

same language must share the common background which produced it. Figuratively, it explains how linguistic output varies based on input of social situations. In the example of Priya's linguistic assimilation to the speech patterns of her parents, both Priya and her parents learned English in school. On the surface level, this background is the same. In both India and America, English is taught as a language of social advancement. English is a necessity with no cultural value for any member of the family, but this congruent background and manner of thinking regarding English does not consider the situation in which the language is used. Priya has used English in her everyday life for her entire life, growing up with it and collecting American mannerisms and slang along the way. Speaking with her, there is no indication of English being her third language. Her speech is entirely "normal" in a way that her parents – with accented, exact English – cannot understand. In order to make sure that she is understood, Priya adjusts her speech to more exactly fit what her parents expect to hear from her English. This issue is not a product of immigration, but rather of intergenerational miscommunication.

E. Culture

The topic of culture is incredibly broad in scope. For the purposes of simplification, I asked my informant specific questions about her cultural expressions in order to assess how she has accumulated cultural knowledge over time. In other words, I was interested in determining how my informant had been taught to understand her sense of belonging. Priya explained to me that she feels a strong connection to her Indian identity because of the importance her parents placed on instilling in her Indian traditions. This formed her cultural understanding of Indian nationhood. In Priya's experience, being Indian meant doing things "the Indian way": performing activities indexical of belonging which reflect ontological assumptions of

"kindedness" (Kockleman 2012). These activities include: watching Hindi television and Bollywood movies, eating Indian food, maintaining strict vegetarianism, "going to the temple, being religious, praying, [and] speaking in Gujarati, not English, in the house." While a certain number of these activities do make their way out of the private sphere and into traditionally American spaces, in general they are all representative of Priya's private persona. In public, she wears American clothing and speaks in English. In her own words, this combination of identities is the definition of assimilation:

> Being involved in whatever culture or community you're living in or whatever country's culture and adapting to that and kind of being part of those traditions and but, you know, at the same time like not forgetting your own… I think even though you're part of another country, or like even the country where you were born, you're a part of their culture. I think it's very much so important to remember where your family came from, where your parents came from, and like what their culture is.

In addition to this definition, she offered a reference to a song entitled "Don't Forget Where You Belong" by One Direction, a British boyband for which nearly every American teenage girl had an obsession in the early 2010s. Clearly, she has assimilated effectively. Priya believes that she has successfully assimilated as well, stating that there she doesn't see a rift between her two cultural forms because she doesn't internalize the conflict between them (Chen, Martínez, and Bond 2008). In her eyes, the two are distinct but not mutually exclusive. However, this was not how she was raised. Priya's parents placed a high level of importance on highlighting the differences between Indian and American cultural identities, and as such "shed Indian culture in a positive light and American in a negative. By creating a distinction between the two, they made it seem that Indian culture is right and American is wrong." Priya did believe in this moral hierarchy for a large portion of her life. Over time, however, she has learned to

masterfully balance her cultural identities, which is made much easier by seeking out the similarities rather than differences.

For example, in response to the question "Do you feel the pressure to be perfect, smart, and successful more from Indians or Americans?" Priya simply responded "Yes." This similarity makes reference to the stresses of being associated with a "model minority" group: an identity which seems pervasive amongst all Asian-Americans and helps to maintain an overarching Indian identity (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013). For Priya, the pressures of being a model minority only make worse the notion "that the only way to succeed is to be a doctor, engineer, scientist… there is nothing else in life" which her parents have instilled in her "from the beginning." In addition, western beauty standards are pervasive in all parts of Priya's identity: both Indians and Americans praise light skin color over dark (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013) and thinness. Once, Priya's mother asked me to tell Priya that she needs to lose weight, as her mother thought the advice would be better received from my mouth. This experience reminded me of offhand comments made by my own American mother – she's gained a lot of weight, she looks awful, etc. – about the weight of others behind their backs. In both cultures, these comments are exclusively targeted at the appearance of women and girls.

While there are similarities between Indian and American cultural forms, in general Priya has learned to understand that it is hard for her family to comprehend American cultural forms because they haven't had as much exposure to them as she – being second-generation – has. In other words, assimilation is a process "which has both economic and sociocultural dimensions" and "begins with the immigrant generation and continues through the second generation and beyond" (Brown and Bean 2006). Priya is continuing the process of integration her parents began when they immigrated to the United States. As such, she feels a cultural connection to

other children of immigrants who share the same experiences of growing up in Indian culture and assimilating to an American way of life. An example of this type of understanding can be seen in Priya's relationship to another Indian student, named Manisha, with whom we attended high school. Priya explained how she and Manisha "kind of had the same experiences growing up" with regards to how their parents raised them "to be in touch with [their Indian] culture and not lose it." In addition, the two shared the bond of having "similar issues in terms of relating to American culture and American people and like customs and stuff like that." Priya's bicultural identity is informed by a combination of her upbringing (what she was taught about cultural forms by her parents) and her lived experience between Indian and American cultural expressions. This is an experience one can only truly understand if they have grown up navigating the same cultural divide.

On that note, she finds it difficult to relate to "white-washed" Indian people: Indians who were raised to be American and therefore do not understand any aspect of the linguistic or cultural forms of their parents. In her definition of "white-washed," Priya made no mention of her religion. This is interesting given that "religion [is] frequently considered the most salient form and manifestation of ethnicity" (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013, 365) and Indian immigrants tend to believe that Hinduism and "Indianness" are so tied together that you can't have one without the other. Priya's parents may agree with this notion, but Priya has spent her whole life performing Hinduism out of a sense of duty rather than belief. Therefore, Hinduism and its practice has much less effect on her cultural identity than does speaking the languages of her parents' respective regional affiliations. It is for this reason that Priya feels a sense of belonging to the overarching identity of being "brown" despite the fact that those with whom she is identifying are largely Muslim rather than Hindu.

F. Separation and Togetherness

The final section explores my informant's cultural identities in conjunction (and disjunction) with one another. This is a useful tool for framing her sense of belonging to certain identities because it creates a scale on which to measure belonging. For example, Priya was raised absolutely in an Indian cultural formation, and her parents made sure that every aspect of her life growing up was inculcated with "versions of authentic "Indianness" as they imagined it" (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013, 377). However, over the course of her life, Priya has undergone the process of "immigrant acculturation:" becoming aligned with a new cultural identity (in this case, American) to her preexisting Indian one (Chen, Martínez, and Bond 2008). In this way, she is falling into line with the actions of her fellow Indian-American children of immigrants by creating a new Indian identity that holds onto and teaches Indian culture but at the same time adapts to a modern American life (Ganapathy-Coleman 2013). For Priya, this process occurred naturally over a lifetime: it is simply part of her background. For those who have not undergone the same experience, however, it requires some explanation:

> My bicultural identity is definitely more accepted in group of people of color because they face the same things and have had similar experiences which makes it easier for them to understand where I'm coming from. In groups where I am with white people, it is a little harder for them to understand my point of view because we have not had similar experiences… I have had some white friends and non-Indian friends ask questions about why I do certain things, like being home by 9 PM, and then I explain to them the cultural significance. But all in all, I think most people accept it.

In the context of Priya's explanation, "white people" is synonymous with Americans: those who do not understand her experience while "people of color" corresponds to immigrants and children of immigrants who have similar cultural identities and experiences. Even for labels

that are explicitly based on color, such as the identity of being "brown" – a blanket term which Priya uses for interactions "with non-South Asian people [eg: white people] because that is a term they understand." – the experience aspect of these definitions is far more important than skin color. Priya prefers to use the term "brown" to *desi*, the Oxford Dictionaries term for "a person of Indian, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi birth or descent who lives abroad," for the same reason. Because Priya grew up with few Indian peers, she learned to connect to fellow children of immigrants, particularly those from Bangladesh, who "also have first generation, immigrant parents" and "a strong focus on education" and family values. Most relevantly for Priya's teenage years, these friends also lived with strict parental rules that restricted their ability to go out with friends or partake in "non-school related activities in general."

While Priya would never self-identify as South Asian or Asian in general, she identifies "strongly as a woman of color and as a child of immigrants" because those are aspects of her identity which have more strongly shaped her lived experience. Priya feels Indian because she grew up with Indian parents and surrounded by Indian cultural forms, American because she grew up physically in the United States, and Indian-American as a combination of the two. Priya believes that "being Indian hasn't stopped [her] from being American." Because the two identities are not mutually exclusive, they can be balanced, and Priya regards herself "as able to handle both "halves" of [her] personality well." This idea of a hyphenated identity is common in the rest of the South Asian diaspora as well as a result of the fact that every community has a different history based on where they settled outside of South Asia. In America, despite being a so-called "nation of immigrants," more recent immigrants are perceived as being too different and are therefore discriminated against (van der Veer 1995). Priya has personally experienced this discrimination, having been told to "go back to where she came from" by a white woman on

a public bus. Ironically, this outburst occurred when she was on her way home to visit her parents. Unfortunately for xenophobes, discrimination has been known to spark the "reactive" mechanism (Brown and Bean 2006) of racial and ethnic identity, which involves a person performing their racial or ethnic identity more loudly and prominently after experiencing discrimination.

An example of this can be seen in Priya's life. In 2016, after British-Pakistani singer Zayn Malik was called a "curry scented [expletive]," the hashtag "#curryscented" was used by a number of South Asians to show their ethnic pride. Priya participated in this cultural expression, posting a photo on Instagram of herself dressed in traditional Indian clothing with the hashtag, despite the fact that the insult was originally directed at someone of Pakistani rather than Indian origin. Mutual discrimination is simply another experience of cultural expression, which explains its ability to create connections between groups that normally would not identify with one another. It is for this reason that "immigrant" – or "child of immigrants" in the case of Priya – is such a strong point of identification. The role of being a child of immigrants universally requires the child act as a cultural guide for their parents and enhance the social capital of the entire family through higher education and a successful career. It is only in this situation which Priya feels that her ability to strike the balance between her cultural forms is less than perfect:

> I do feel caught between cultures sometimes, but I feel more caught when I'm trying to explain American culture to my family rather than explain Indian culture to my American peers. It is hard to my family to grasp American culture because they haven't been as exposed to it as I have been, like by growing up here and being surrounded by American peers. When I'm explaining Indian culture to Americans, I feel more like a bridge because I'm exposing them to my culture and so far, they have been open and receptive to it.

VII. Conclusion

To conclude, I thought it would be apt to return to the main themes outlined in the introduction of this project in order to look at them with fresh eyes and newfound understanding of what it means to navigate belonging, biculturalism, and bilingualism from the lens of a person who experiences it firsthand. First is the theme of measuring normalcy and deviance from it. This ties into Priya's view of Indian cultural identity as a "base" on top of which her identity is built. For her, it was normal to grow up speaking Gujarati, maintaining vegetarianism, and praying twice a day. She had simply never learned how to do things differently. Indian culture, and the Indian-American identity she built as a result of it, is her norm: everyone else who does not share this experience cannot ever hope to fully understand her. The next theme relates to this notion of understanding. Priya's identity, like any identity, is a product of experience. For this reason, she finds herself able to connect more with people with whom she shares some aspect of her identity, whether it be a cultural similar upbringing or the mutual hatred of a classmate which caused us to become friends so many years ago.

The next theme is the importance of understanding the conjunction of language and culture. This ties well into one of the later themes: that of connecting to a community through upholding linguistic and cultural forms. For Priya and for immigrant communities in general, speaking the language of a homeland is a way of connecting to it, even from the furthest corners of the diaspora. However, she tied herself more to a "bicultural" identity than one of "diasporic belonging" because the cultural forms she experiences and performs in everyday life are aspects of her personality rather than of her physical location within a certain country or place. Language allows a person to connect to their cultural identity in the most intimate of ways, and cultural understanding would be incomplete without it. On the other hand,

Priya's lack of opinion regarding English shows her lack of personal connection with its associated national identity: that of the United States. The next theme continues the explanation of this conjunction and disjunction between Priya's native and learned, or "home" and "host" linguistic and cultural forms. For the entirety of her life, Priya's parents have upheld the superiority of "Indianness" in the home. Both English language and American cultural forms are generally kept out of the house. For Priya, the lack of integration between her cultures simply eases the burden of having to separate them. The next theme, which touches on determining which linguistic or cultural form is most appropriate in a given situation, explains this separation of cultural expressions with the idea that each is appropriate in a different sphere.

For Priya, Indian identity is appropriate in the private sphere, while American identity is preferred in public. Priya's "projected propensity" (Kockelman 2012) towards "Gujarati cultural forms" and "Gujarati language" versus "American cultural forms" and "American English" has hierarchized how she indexes these constellations of kinds. The next theme discusses this hierarchy, as well as the idea that a person is comprised of numerous identities spurred by their experiences. This idea of experience ties into the next theme, which states that there is no right or wrong way to perform culture. Culture is inherently experiential, and because every aspect of it is performed differently by individuals, no two people will share the exact same experience. However, the fact that all cultural forms are tied to a background and upbringing is universal. Regardless of what identity is being discussed, the core of belonging hinges upon the next theme: the necessity of remembering your roots. These roots are the background which formulates our connection to our culture; we would be nothing without them. The final overarching theme brought up by this project is the idea of speaking

the same language in figurative versus literal senses. Among children of immigrants in general and in Priya's experience specifically, the disconnect felt between immigrant parents and their children stems from a difference of experience. Priya and her parents speak all of the same literal languages – Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, and English – but differently express those languages in their everyday lives. In order to have her parents understand her, Priya adapts both her vocabulary and manner of speaking as a way to mirror her parents.

When I asked Priya her opinion on my progress with this project based on reading the literature review and data presentation sections, she provided me with the biggest honor I could have wished for: that "it was a pretty accurate representation of what [her] life has been and that anyone "who isn't a first generation American" would be able to read and understand it. I would not dare to posit that this project represents a universal immigrant experience, but it would be safe to say that it does provide one example of the universality of diasporic belonging. Priya, a child of immigrants and of diaspora, is more than these labels. However, the language of these labels matches up with her experience, and it is for this reason that she chooses to identify with them on a large scale. This idea relates to the question of scale of identity. Priya has expressed her connection primarily to Indian heritage and secondarily to the experience of growing up in the United States, but her identities are myriad and can represent all sorts of levels of granularity. She is also a woman of color. In terms of difficulty coming to terms with the pressures of being a "model minority" and being entrusted with generating the upward mobility of a family, she is also Asian. When she was looking to connect to peers in her high school with similar cultural backgrounds, she was South Asian.

The next level of granularity, being Indian, is an identity which has been pervasive in every moment and aspect of Priya's life as a result of her upbringing. However, the way that she has navigated her life – between cultural and linguistic spheres – has shaped her connection to an Indian-American identity. At the smallest level, she is a product of her experiences. She is unique because they are uniquely personal. It is this label which matters most. All other labels are merely linguistic, and Priya knows well how language can be adapted to fit more perfectly into situations when necessary.

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