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PERPETUAL OUTSIDERS?: LEARNING RACE IN THE SOUTH ASIAN

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Following Schueller (2003), I used critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012; Goldberg, 1993, 2009; Harpalani, 2003, 2013; I. H. F. López, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994; Taylor, 2013) as an intervention into postcolonial theory (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993; Gandhi, 1998; Mani, 1998; U. Narayan, 1997a; Prashad, 2000; Said, 1979; Sinha, 2000a) to explore the relevance of the concept of race in the South Asian American (SAA) experience in the U.S. and how SAAs learn to become racialized. The focus in this study was on how participants learned, understood, and made sense of their racialized experience. Learning was defined from a sociocultural perspective using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 1999c, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003). Feminist ethnography was the research approach used to capture the thick descriptions of the SAA experience. The research was conducted in Summer, a college town, located in a northeastern state in the United States. Thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2008) complemented by Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), postcolonial feminist theory, and critical race theory was the analytical lens used in this study. The participants in the study learned to become South Asian American, a distinct racial identity. The data suggests that the concept of race is learned and that religion and caste (culture) in conjunction with skin color, hair color, and other physical attributes (biology) constitute the SAA racial category. SAAs are racialized differently from other groups, and following Goldberg's (2009) typology, I call this type of differential racialization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012), Racial South Asian Americanization. Looking at religion and caste as attributes of race decenters the dominant American perspective on race and racism, thus calling for a radical retheorization of race (Loomba,1998; Schueller 2003). This study contributes to postcolonial theory, Desicrit (the form of critical race theory that focuses on SAAs), CHAT, race theory, South Asian American Studies, and adult learning by demonstrating the relevance of race in the SAA experience.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Coming to the Question

"You'll have to pay a million dollars in dowry since you are so dark!" This was a teasing remark made to me by my uncle when I visited India at the age of five. That incident was my welcome into a color conscious society that did not claim to be colorblind. It was my first realization that I was 'dark' and that skin color was important. Skin color was and continues to be an important marker of beauty (Prashad, 2000) and value for both women and men in India, although it may be more relevant to the daily lives of women. There is a preference for fair skin across all social categories, including class, caste, religion, and region (Prashad, 2000; Trautmann, 1997). I would suggest that this is due to color prejudice and the ensuing color consciousness that is alive and prevalent in Indian society. Skin color seems to be a social ranking – the lighter skinned on the upside of power by being more desired and valued and the darker skinned others on the downside of power (Glenn, 2008; F. Harris, 2014, November 19). Dark is the other, not valued by family or community, when compared to the Indian ideal of being fair (Khalid, 2013).

Born of Indian parents in Malaysia, I came to the United States of America at the age of 17, without much knowledge about the workings of the racialized American society. On arrival at the airport, a casual, off-hand comment made to me by an immigration official along the lines of, "I never knew that there were such pretty girls in Malaysia" had an impact on my life. That was the very first time in my life that anybody had ever called me pretty. I was the same dark skinned

girl who had gotten on the plane from Malaysia to the U.S. However, in one moment I changed from being dark skinned aka unattractive to being pretty. How did this happen?

It made me curious as to how skin color worked in the U.S. Was skin color equated to beauty? Was there not a hierarchy based on skin color in the U.S.? I learned otherwise while living, studying, and working in the U.S. that skin color is an important physical and social marker in the United States. In fact, in popular usage, skin color often becomes a stand-in for race, a social construct based on physical characteristics. Race in the American context structures U.S. society (López, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994) and is a defining characteristic of U.S. society (López, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994). Race and color prejudice seem to be intertwined and inseparable resulting in the problematic, black/white binary: one is often reduced to being black or white in the American context. This black/white binary is saturated with power and privilege, and the politics of belonging. In this dualism, there seems to be little place for others: Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, to name a few (Delgado, 1998; Martinez, 1998).

Since I am Indian by ancestry, Malaysian by birth, and American by citizenship, where do I and others like me fit into the racialized American landscape? As a South Asian American, I am not white, but neither am I historically and culturally black. I am not seen as Asian either, since Asian in the U.S. context is conflated with East Asian (Kibria, 1996). So do I become racially ambiguous (Harpalani, 2003, 2013; Kibria, 1996; Murti, 2010)? Moreover, I am always questioned about my nationality, while an American nationality is usually not ascribed to me. I am repeatedly being asked, like many other Asian Americans, including South Asian Americans, "Where are you from?" (Mohanty, 1993; Takaki, 2000) or "Where are you *really* from?," questioning my belongingness (Bhatia, 2007) and locating me as an *other* or foreigner (Murti, 2010; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989) in the American racialized landscape. Initially, these questions angered me, later they compelled me to explore the concept of race and its signification

for me and others like me. It made me ask myself questions like these: What does race mean to people? How do people learn about race? How does race become meaningful in people's lives?

Background

I was interested in exploring the relevance of the concept of race to the experiences of South Asian Americans (SAAs) of Indian origin in the U.S. This exploration was in part about me and my collective identity as a South Asian American, but more importantly it is an attempt to recover as well as tell the stories and experiences of SAAs in the U.S.

The term South Asian American broadly refers to immigrants as well as U.S.-born people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Maldives although this can vary to include Afghanistan. My focus in this study is on SAAs of Indian origin from the Indian subcontinent as well as the Indian diaspora living in the U.S. South Asian Americans have different designations in scholarly and popular literature, such as Asian Indians, South Asians, South Asian Americans, Indian Americans, desis, or Bharatiyas (V. Lal, 2008, p. x); yet none of these designations have universal acceptance among this group (V. Lal, 2008). Although I recognize that SAA is a problematic label, I use it in this study. SAA is a more inclusive identity that is not tied solely to a nation-state. It includes people from the Indian subcontinent, the Indian diaspora as well as those who might not be able to trace their origins to a particular nation-state due to the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947.

South Asian Americans of Indian origin (referred to as Asian Indians in the U.S. Census) are the third largest Asian American immigrant group in the U.S. with a population of 2.8 million in 2010 making up 0.9% of the total U.S. population (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Hasan, March 2012). The Asian Indian population grew from 361.5 thousand in 1980 to 2.8 million in 2010. This population grew at a rate of 125.6% between 1980 and 1990 (Améredia, 2009), 106%

between 1990 and 2000 (Chhabra, 2001), and 69.8% between 2000 and 2010 (Hoeffel et al., March 2012) outpacing other Asian American groups with a population of one million or more. However, it is difficult to accurately account for the Asian Indian population in the U.S. since the racial categorization for this group in the U.S. Census has changed over time (Harpalani, 2003; Murti, 2010), and there was no separate racial category for them in the 1900, 1950, 1960, and 1970 (U.S. Census). For example, in the 1970 U.S. Census they were categorized as white (Harpalani, 2013, p. 105).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Asian Indians are the highest educated ethnic/racial group in this country with 70.7% of them having a bachelor's degree or higher (Ogunwole, Malcolm P. Drewery, & Rios-Vargas, May 2012) as compared to 28.2% of the U.S population overall (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). 28% of Asian Indians worked in science and engineering fields as compared to 5% of the U.S. population overall (Pew Research Center, 2013, p. 27) and 69.3% were in management, business, science and arts occupations (Desilver, 2014, para. 7). Their median annual household income was $88,000 as compared to the $49,800 earned by all U.S. households. Thus, SAAs have been included in the 'model minority' category along with other Asian groups by white dominant society (Abraham, 2000; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989) due to their educational and professional accomplishments and their financial success. However, even though SAAs along with the other high achieving Asian American groups have been positioned as the solution to America's racial and labor problems (Abraham, 2000; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), it appears that they are only wanted for their labor (Prashad, 2000). Although SAA history in this country dates back to the late 1700s, and their different class compositions across various time periods have resulted in different perceptions and treatments of this group, Takaki (1989) and Prashad (2000) contend that they are seen as "forever immigrants" like most Asian Americans. Prashad (200) adds that their lives are not wanted in the U.S. (p. 82). Their lives made up of their

customs, social practices, religions and ways of being are seen as *other* and discriminated against starting from their immigration to the U.S. in the early 1900s. At that time, they were seen as the most inassimilable of all Asiatic races (V. Lal, 2008).

Today, there has been an increase in discrimination, stereotyping, racial profiling, and violence against SAAs due to their success, growing numbers, visibility, and changing class composition from the 1980s onwards in American society (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989, p. 52; Takaki, 1989) and the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Chen & Yoo, 2010; V. Lal, 2008; Murti, 2010; New York Commission on Human Rights, Summer 2003). Violence against SAAs, especially Sikhs, increased immediately after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon since they were mistaken for Muslims (Chen & Yoo, 2010; Murti, 2010; New York City Commission on Human Rights, Summer 2003). A Sikh man in Arizona, Balbir Singh Sodhi, was the first victim to be killed immediately after 9/11 as a retaliatory act or hate crime when he was mistaken for a Muslim (V. Lal, 2008, p. xiii). SAAs have been stereotyped as terrorists after 9/11 as exemplified by the tweets calling the first South Asian Miss America a terrorist and incidents like the Gap "Make Love" ad campaign poster featuring a Sikh man with a turban and beard wearing Gap clothes being defaced in New York City with racial epithets and the words "make love" crossed out and replaced with "make bombs" (Kaur, 2013). Unfortunately, these hate crimes against SAAs continue, such as the massacre at a gurdwara, a Sikh temple, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin in 2012 and the brutal beating of Columbia University professor Prabhjot Singh in New York City in fall 2013. SAAs continue to report racial profiling and increase in discrimination in airports and planes after 9/11 (Chen & Yoo, 2010; Cyriac & Murthy, 2011; Murti, 2010).

The systematic discrimination against SAAs takes the form of inequality in terms of the "glass ceiling" (V. Lal, 2008; Murti, 2010; Takaki, 1989). Asian Americans, including SAAs, are systematically absent from higher levels of administration, otherwise known as the glass ceiling

(Takaki, 1989, p. 476). Saxenian contends that SAAs believe that their professional advancement is "limited by race" (as cited in V. Lal, 2008, p. 60) and that is why they are not in managerial positions. As one Indian engineer recounted, SAAs seeking senior positions were told that they "were not sufficiently well-informed about "American culture" to assume leadership positions, or that their own cultural upbringing precluded them from exercising effective leadership" (V. Lal, 2008, p. 60). Moreover, SAA professionals who believed that their professional advancement had been limited by race stated that "these concerns increased significantly with the age and experience of the respondents (Saxenian as cited in V. Lal, 2008, p. 60).

The systematic and structural discrimination that SAAs are facing is defined through race and class, and the class privilege and high professional achievement of the professional and technical SAA immigrants that provided them with some protection against racism, discrimination, and color prejudice seems to be eroding (V. Lal, 2008; Murti, 2010). They too have been named subordinate by dominant white society based on their race (Bhattacharjee, 1992) and are no longer immune to racism or discrimination (Bhattacharjee, 1992; Murti, 2010). Prejudice and discrimination based on skin color and different ways of being or culture is a part of their daily lives, yet there is not much empirical work done on their experiences dealing with issues of racism and prejudice (Gee, Ro, Shariff-Marco, & Chae, 2009; V. Lal, 2008). As Lal (2008) argued:

> Though the fact of the ascendancy of Indian professionals is now widely recognized, their narrative remains woefully incomplete. Stories about racism, discrimination, and the "glass ceiling" are frequently encountered in conversations, but little empirical work has been done … to document such stories. (p. 59)

In other words, the racialized experiences of SAAs need to be told.

Problem Statement

Using the postcolonial lens (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993; Gandhi, 1998; Mani, 1998; U. Narayan, 1997a; Prashad, 2000; Said, 1979; Sinha, 2000a), the scholarship on the experiences of SAAs can be categorized into three broad overlapping perspectives: historical (Chandrasekhar, 1982b; Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), historical-materialist (Harpalani, 2003; Prashad, 2000), and social-cultural (Abraham, 2006; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000). All three perspectives focus on the exclusion and discrimination of South Asian Americans by state and civil society – the subordination of SAAs on the basis of their national origins, race, and culture, and the responses of South Asian Americans to this subordination. While both the historical and historical-materialist perspectives focus on the actions of the state and civil society (Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), the historical-materialist perspective sharpens the analysis by adding the demands of capitalism to show how labor needs driven by the market influenced immigration policy and determined the nature, composition, and rights of SAAs (Harpalani, 2003; Prashad, 2000). The social-cultural perspective, on the other hand, uses the lens of culture to critically examine the racial, cultural, and religious identities constructed by SAAs as a response to their subordination by American state and civil society (Abraham, 2006; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000).

Although the presence, composition, rights, and experiences of SAAs have been historically, materially, and socio-culturally shaped by race, "there is still a real uncertainty in the literature over the question of race and racism, much of which has to do with the lack of attention paid to race in South Asian scholarship (Prashad, 2000, p. 98). Much of postcolonial theory is silent on the question of race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002) and/or ignores or dismisses the validity of race as an analytical category (Schueller, 2003, p. 36; 56). In postcolonial theory race

is still conceptualized on Western notions of biological or scientific differences (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 1998, 2009). Thus, although postcolonial theory focuses on cultural differences (Schueller, 2003), such as religion, it does not theorize those cultural differences as race (Loomba, 1998). Religion and caste in the SAA context are defined as cultural artifacts, thus not included in the analytical category of race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 1998). Thus the notions of religion (Loomba, 2009), caste (Loomba, 2009), and color consciousness (Mazumdar, 1989; Schueller, 2003) among SAAs do not seem to be perceived as being connected to race. Loomba (1998) argued that religion and caste and the ensuing communalism and casteism in the Indian context should be included, understood, and analyzed in the analytical category of race even though they are not anchored or manifested by phenotypical or other biological differences, thus retheorizing racial difference in a more radical way. Schueller (2003) advocated for making race a broader, more necessary and robust analytical category in postcolonial theory.

Research Purpose

Following Schueller (2003), I use critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012; Goldberg, 1993, 2009; Harpalani, 2003, 2013; I. H. F. López, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994; Taylor, 2013) as an intervention into postcolonial theory (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993; Gandhi, 1998; Mani, 1998; U. Narayan, 1997a; Prashad, 2000; Said, 1979; Sinha, 2000a) to explore the relevance of the concept of race in the South Asian American experience in the U.S. and how SAAs learn to become racialized. The focus in this study is on how participants learn, understand and make sense of their racialized experience. Participants in this study are either U.S.-born, naturalized U.S. citizens, or permanent resident immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and diaspora living in the U.S.: (a) whose roots can be traced back to present-day

India and (b) who self-identify as SAA or one of the other designations used such as Asian

Indian, South Asian, Indian American, desi, or Bharatiya (as mentioned above, most do not self-

identify as SAA). My primary interest lies in the racialized experience, not the immigrant

experience, hence the inclusion of both U.S.-born and immigrant SAAs in this study. The

immigrant status of the participants in my study did shape their racialized experience (see Chapter

5), but it was not the only factor affecting their racialized experience. Nor did I expect it to be

from the conception of my study. Thus I did not privilege it in this study.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question is:

What is the relevance of the concept of race in the South Asian American (SAA)

experience?

The secondary research questions are:

a) What conceptions of race do SAA participants' life histories reveal?

b) How have SAA participants' conceptions of race shaped their experiences?

c) How did the SAA participants learn these conceptions of race?

I define race socially, not biologically, since there is no biological basis to race (Graves,

2015). Thus the social definitions of race vary depending on the context (Graves, 2015, para. 7). I

use Graves (2015) definition of race: Race is an arbitrary combination of certain physical and

social characteristics, the characteristics and combination are dependent on the context, to

categorize human beings and this categorization "*always operate[s] in the service of social-*

dominance hierarchies"(para. 7; italics in original). Therefore, race is fluid. It is a process and

product of social thought and social relations, and it is always politically contested (Omi &

Winant, 1994). To illustrate, the participants in this study are categorized racially as SAA in a

predominantly white region in the U.S. based on a combination of physical and social

characteristics such as skin color, hair color, religion, caste, and perceived/ascribed nationality

(see Chapter 5). This SAA racial category is both an identity (a label that is given to the

participants) and an identification (a label that is used by participants to self-identify) in this

study. Thus race, a social category devised by humans and not by nature, is a relational term that

is meaningful only in terms of intergroup and intragroup social relations. Race is always socially

and "historically situated" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 61).

Racial formation is the idea that racial categories are not natural or given. Racial

categories are formed, changed, disrupted, destroyed, transformed, and reformed over time, thus

racial formation is a social, historical and political process (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). Racism,

like race, is complex and complicated and not easy to define. It is not fixed or concrete, and

changes over time. As Omi and Winant (1994) note, "A racial project can be defined as *racist* if

… it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race"*

(Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 71; italics in original). Racism operates by marking and categorizing

certain human differences as *other* and inferiorizing the *other* by ascribing essentialized or

inherent qualities based on certain combination of physical and social differences (Sarkar, 2006)

to the benefit of the dominant group which is marked and categorized as *normal,* thus inherently

superior. Racial ideology and social structure "mutually shape the nature of racism in a complex,

dialectical and overdetermined manner" (Omi & Winant, 1994, pp. 74 - 75). Racialization refers

to cultural and political processes or situations in which race is invoked as an explanation as well

as to specific ideological practices in which race is deployed (Murji & Solomos, 2005).

In this study, I focus on race not ethnicity, since SAAs are classified and categorized as a

race in the U.S. Census not an ethnicity. I am aware that it is difficult to separate ethnicity and

race and at times, the participants collapsed the two ideas. The SAA participants in the study do

use ethnicity to describe their origins in South Asia namely: Parsi, Gujarati, and, Punjabi. I made

sure to discuss and analyze ethnicity and if or how it can be separated from the concept of race when narratives about ethnicity addressed the relevance of race in the participants' lives in the U.S.

Learning is defined from a sociocultural perspective using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 1999c, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003). Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) provides a descriptive framework to explain the 'what,' 'how,' and 'why' something is learned by using human activity as the unit of analysis to understand human actions and operations. Activity is defined as an object-directed, culturally mediated collective effort. Individual and group actions are embedded in and thereby made meaningful, in this collective effort. In CHAT, learning happens in everyday life and is an outcome of an object-directed activity. It is important to note that learning is not necessarily the outcome of every activity. Activity is always evolving and changing due to inherent structural contradictions within and among activity systems. These contradictions are the "source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) and their identification and resolution may lead to individual and social change. The resolution of contradictions leading to new patterns of activity or the formation of new activity systems is called expansive learning (Engeström, 2001, p. 139).

Feminist ethnography was the approach used to capture the thick descriptions of the SAA experience. Feminist ethnography is the contextualized, cultural interpretation of the routine, everyday experiences of a cultural group informed by a feminist stance (Buch & Staller, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Skeggs, 2001; Wolcott, 1989) which makes the researched 'subjects' with agency (J. Lal, 1996) and acknowledges the politics of representation to mitigate the power differentials between the researcher and researched (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Stacey, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994) and the inherent biases in the doing and writing of ethnography. Feminist ethnography also helped me to not make the SAAs in this study the *generalized other* representing their entire culture (Narayan as cited in J. Lal, 1996). In other words, the stories of

the four SAA participants in this study are their particular stories, not the story of *the* SAA

experience in the U.S. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (supplemented by postcolonial and

critical race theory was used as the framework to analyze structural aspects as well as day-to-day

experiences to reveal the relevance of race in the SAA experience and as a way to understand

learning.

Methods

The research was conducted for over a year at Summer located in a northeastern state in

the United States. "K," an Indian restaurant, a meeting place for SAAs was the primary research

site. Field notes from 74.41 hours of participant observations at "K" and 13 life history interviews

with four participants totaling 14.55 hours and 604 pages of transcription were the sources of

data. The key informants were the owners of the restaurant.

Purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify the four SAA

participants in the study. The selection criteria was: U.S.-born or naturalized U.S. citizens or

permanent resident immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and diaspora living in the U.S. (a)

whose roots can be traced back to present-day India and (b) who self-identify as SAA or one of

the other designations used such as Asian Indian, South Asian, Indian American, desi, or

Bharatiya. The study was made up of four information rich cases, since "the validity,

meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the

information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the

researcher than with sample size" (Patton, 2002, p. 245). The four cases provided not only a depth

of individual experience, but also differences across their experiences. Three women, Gnana,

Persis, Satya, and one man, Gallifrey were the four research participants. Gallifrey and Satya, the

twenty-something first-generation SAAs, were students at the university in Summer during the

data collection phase of the study. Gnana and Persis are immigrants from Pakistan and India respectively.

I collected four types of data: data about the SAA identity, data about the cultural practices of SAAs, data about SAAs feeling regarding being different or *othered* in terms of race and the significations of being *othered*, and data about the agentic acts of SAAs in their conception and enactment of race.

I used a multiple case study approach (Stake, 1995, 1998, 2005) with thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2008) as the analytic and interpretive lens. Since I was using narrative analysis, I used the stories of the racialized experiences of the participants as data and analysis and helped make meaning of their racialized experiences (Drayton, 2012; Riessman, 1993, 2008). The unit of analysis in this study is individuals, since the phenomenon under study is the "relevance of the concept of race to SAAs" and it is an attribution of persons. The unit of observation is activity, since the phenomenon is generated in and through activity.

Organization of Dissertation

The rest of the study is divided into five chapters covering the literature review, theoretical framework, the research design for my study, the findings, and the conclusion and implications. In chapter 2: Analyzing the Racialized Experience of South Asian Americans in the United States: A Literature Review, I situate the SAA experience in the larger field of Asian American Studies. I start with a brief overview of postcolonial theory, critique its undertheorization of race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 2009; Schueller, 2003) review critical race theory, present my definitions of race, racial formation, racism, and racialization using critical race theory and racial thought in South Asia, and then provide three perspectives on the racialized experience of South Asian Americans in the U.S. using the key postcolonial themes

of history, capitalist exploitation and culture. In Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: Cultural

Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a Perspective on Learning, I give a brief critical overview

of CHAT which provides a tool to empirically analyze the SAA experience by conceptualizing

human activity as collective activity with the cultural and historical context embedded in it and

foregrounds the subject position of SAAs in the analysis. CHAT also provides the means to

understand how SAAs' conceptions of race are learned. In Chapter 4: Research Design, I give an

overview of feminist ethnography, the research site, the participant profiles, my data collection

and data analysis strategies, indicators of research quality, and limitations of the study. In Chapter

5: Learning Race in the South Asian American Experience, I summarize the findings of this study

by analyzing the racialized narratives of each participant - Gallifrey, Persis, Gnana and Satya in

that order - using activity systems from CHAT as a heuristic tool. In Chapter 6: Conclusions and

Implications, I conclude that the concept of race is relevant to the South Asian experience in the

United States of America. The participants in the study learn to be racialized and learn to become

South Asian American, a distinct racial identity. Racial South Asian Americanization, a type of

differential racialization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012) following Goldberg's (2009)

typology, pushes the concept of race beyond biology to include religion and caste. Religion and

caste (culture) in conjunction with skin color, hair color and other physical attributes (biology)

constitute the racial category of SAAs and the racial formation of this group. Race is

conceptualized as racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1986, 1994).

Chapter 2

Analyzing the Racialized Experience of South Asian Americans in the United States: A Literature Review

Overview

In this chapter, I review postcolonial theory, critical race theory, and three perspectives on the racialized experience of South Asian Americans in the U.S. using a postcolonial lens (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993; Gandhi, 1998; Mani, 1998; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000; Said, 1979; Sinha, 2000a). I begin with a brief overview of postcolonial theory which decenters the taken for granted margins and centers of history, knowledge, and culture, and makes space for alternative, non-western knowledge (Gandhi, 1998, p. ix). The defining characteristics of postcolonial theory that are relevant to my study are: the material, cultural, and political analysis of colonialism and nationalism in the Indian subcontinent and U.S.; and the politics of identity, difference, and representation. The critique of postcolonial theory is its silence on race by focusing on cultural differences or ethnicity (Schueller, 2003) and not theorizing those cultural differences, such as religion and caste as race (Loomba, 1998). In other words, religion and caste in the SAA context are defined as cultural artifacts while race is conceptualized on Western notions of biological or scientific differences (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 1998, 2009), thus not included in the analytical category of race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 1998). I end the chapter with an overview of the scholarship on SAAs and categorizing it into three broad and overlapping perspectives: historical, historical-materialist, and social-cultural. All three perspectives focus on the exclusion and discrimination of South Asian

Americans by state and civil society – the subordination of SAAs on the basis of their national

origins, race, and culture, and the responses of South Asian Americans to this subordination.

Postcolonial Theory

Although postcolonial theory[1] has certain limitations, such as the undertheorizing of race

as a category of analysis, it is a useful lens to examine the racialized experience of SAAs in the

U.S. First of all, postcolonial theory interrupts the trajectory of Western/European modernity and

decenters the taken for granted margins and centers of history, knowledge and culture and makes

space for alternative, non-western knowledge and culture (Gandhi, 1998, p. ix). Thus, it makes it

important and necessary to study the SAA experience in the U.S. in connection with the

historical, political, and cultural context of the Indian subcontinent.

Postcolonial theory is a dialectic union of Marxism and Poststructuralism (Gandhi, 1998)

that engages the historical condition of postcoloniality to expose the material exploitation and

cultural imperialism of colonialism as well as the complicity of the colonized with the colonizer

(Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993; Gandhi, 1998; Sinha, 2000a, 2000b). In so doing, the

theory interrogates the bondage of the mind, self, and culture that remains invisible in the

aftermath of colonialism; questions and reinterprets the East/West, Orient/Occident divide, and

modern/traditional binary—with their implication of Western technological and cultural

superiority (Chakrabarty, 2000; Said, 1979; Sinha, 2000b) and the non-Western *other*; critiques

the enduring hierarchies of knowledge and power (Gandhi, 1998, p. 15; Said, 1979) and the

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[1] An excerpt from this section on postcolonial theory was presented at the 52nd National Conference of the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) and the 30th National Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE)/ L'Association Canadienne pour l'Étude de I'Éducation des Adultes (ACÉÉA)) (Gnanadass & Baptiste, 2011).

ensuing reproductions of hierarchies of domination and subaltern agency (Guha, 1999; Spivak,

1988); and interrogates nationalism and the hegemony of the nation-state (Chatterjee, 1993;

Sinha, 2000). All of that is done with the goal of learning from colonialism's past in order to

"make, but also to gain, theoretical sense out of that past" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 5) and to move

beyond it. The defining characteristics of postcolonial theory that are relevant to my study are: the

material and cultural analysis of colonialism in the Indian subcontinent and U.S. imperialism; the

critique of modernity and the ensuing West/non-West divide; rethinking the political and

critiquing nationalism; and the politics of identity, difference, and representation. The key

postcolonial themes used in this analysis of the SAA experience are history, identity, agency, and

representation to reveal the role of capitalism and cultural imperialism in constructing and

discriminating against SAAs as the subordinated or *other*; the ensuing resistance to this

domination by SAAs foregrounding their cultural alterity; and the perpetuation of hierarchies of

domination by SAAs through the accommodation and appropriation of the dominant discourses

of race, culture, the East/West binary, and capitalism.

Postcolonial theory centers on the postcolonial condition as a historical condition, not a

rupture in history. The entry point into the inquiry is colonialism, since colonialism has shaped

the economic, political, and cultural milieu of today's world. The premise is that "the history of

the West and the history of the non-West are by now irrevocably different and irrevocably

shared" (Sangari as cited in Kelly, 2001, p. 11844) through colonialism. Colonialism is a specific

set of conditions that created particular human subjects, the ensuing division of labor (P. Taylor,

personal communication, February, 12, 2012), and a particular civilizational hierarchy that

became 'natural' and universal. Postcolonial theory reveals that the colonial project created both

the colonized and the colonizer and that the colonial project was not only about material

exploitation, cultural imperialism, and political dominance, it was also about self-making (P.

Taylor, personal communication, February, 12, 2012). The creation of the self, entailed the

creation of the *other* – the self as the colonizer and the *other* as the colonized with the ensuing power differentials. Moreover, this self-making based on difference had material, cultural and political implications for both the colonizer and the colonized, since they were materially, politically, psychologically, and culturally interdependent. Thus the postcolonial analysis is relevant to postcolonial societies – both the colonizer and the colonized.

Postcolonial theory integrates Marxism and poststructuralism to "account for the meanings and consequences of the colonial encounter" (Gandhi, 1998, p. ix); however, Marxist or poststructuralist assertions alone cannot exhaustively account for it. "While the poststructuralist critique of Western epistemology and theorization of cultural alterity/difference is indispensable to postcolonial theory, materialist philosophies, such as Marxism, seem to supply the most compelling basis for postcolonial politics" (Gandhi, 1998, p. ix). Cultural alterity/difference refers to the cultural difference between the colonizer and the colonized since the colonizer not only conquered the material domain but also the mind, cultures and selves of the colonized (Nandy as cited on Gandhi, 1998, p. 15). Postcolonial theory makes both economics and culture central to the analysis. The postcolonial lens forces us to rethink the assumption that western capitalism, modernity and nation-state are 'natural' and universal and excavates the enduring legacy of the location of the *other*/colonized as civilizationally inferior thus problematizing the politics of difference and representation in the colonial as well as the postcolonial, imperial context today.

Critique of the Universality and Modernity of Europe

Since colonialism, a project of domination (whether coercive or persuasive [Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002] is debated), was justified as a civilizing mission in India due to India's civilizational inferiority, postcolonial theory questioned the foundational categories that created

this supposed inferiority. Said (1979) challenged the argument that the West (civilized world) brought civilization to the East (Gandhi, 1998, p. 15) by showing that the category of the 'uncivilized' is not natural; he and Dirks (2001) argued that this idea was constructed by colonial knowledge (Dirks, 2001; Said, 1979). Chakrabarty (2000) and Said (1979) also questioned the universality of the Western/European subject and history and then showed that the West/non-West binary was a construction and that both the West and the non-West are particular; not universal. Chakrabarty (2000) argued that modernity is the story of a particular place – Europe. It is not universal. Said (1979) and Dirks (2001) showed how colonial knowledge used Western Enlightenment ideas such as modernity, rationality, religion, and nationalism to know and categorize the colonized as the *other* and how binaries, such as the orient/occident, East/West, modern/tradition, secular/religious, nationalist/colonialist, rational/non-rational, civilized/barbarian etc. were used to construct the non-West as *other* to the European subject. Said (1979) and Dirks (2001) revealed how knowledge about the colonized/non-West through tools such as the census, textual knowledge of the religious texts, the caste system, and so on in India gave power over them and how this knowledge was used to create and consolidate colonial power. The close link between colonial knowledge and colonial power deconstructed the idea of the hyper-real Europe as modern, rational, secular, and the center/core or as universal (Dirks, 2001; Said, 1979) and challenged the hegemony or naturalness of these Western categories. In other words, by questioning the 'naturalness' of European history and subjecthood, scholars like Said (1979) and Chakrabarty (2000) made them particular by naming them. Said (1979) in *Orientalism* argued that these divisions between the West and the non-West *other* became fixed and even at times reified and this 'essentialized' division between us and them created Europe as always the superior and universal. This is relevant today in the U.S. with white dominant society remaining the universal as "American" and the unnamed while the SAAs are the *other,* the 'not' American (see Chapter 5) and named as the model minority. The highly educated and skilled

SAA immigrants post-1965 are named as the model minority by dominant white society and assumed to embody the American ideals of family values and education.

Postcolonial theory also questioned the linear narrative on modernity which positions the traditional non-West as lagging behind the modern West. Chakrabarty (2000) in *Provincializing Europe* argued that the colonized nations were consigned to the "waiting room of history" (p. 8) and positioned as 'not yet' or 'never ready' for self-rule by the colonizer due to their supposedly traditional and backward condition. This idea is reworked in the U.S. context when SAA professionals are denied access to leadership positions and being told "that their own cultural upbringing precluded them from exercising effective leadership" (V. Lal, 2008, p. 60). In other words, the traditional and backward culture of SAA professionals only equips them to serve, not lead whether it be a nation in colonial times or a business in postcolonial times.

Rethinking the Political

Postcolonial scholars also questioned the universality of the nation-state. They did this by critiquing and interrogating both Western nationalism which locates all other nationalisms, including anti-colonial struggles, cultural, and religious nationalisms as not legitimate (Gandhi, 1998) and anti-colonial struggles and postcolonial nationalisms which appropriate and continue to perpetuate the colonial hierarchies of domination. Ludden (2001) interrogated nationalism by asking, "What is the role of culture in nationalism?" (p. 7). The other side of colonialism is the anticolonial struggle and postcolonial theory revealed the appropriation of the modern/tradition trope in this struggle in India and critiqued the complicity of the nationalists with the reification of culture and colonial hierarchies of domination. Colonialism created 'traditional' societies and the nationalists in India appropriated this 'traditional' India in two ways: the appropriation of the British Orientalist conception of ancient Indian civilization (Chatterjee, 1993; Mani, 1998; U.

Narayan, 1997b) and claiming superiority over the spiritual domain (Chatterjee, 1993). First, the

British Orientalist conception of Indian culture was one based on an ancient, Aryan, Hindu

civilization and this was appropriated by the Indian and religious nationalists in the anticolonial

struggle. Reification of this culture and religion as Indian and claiming cultural and racial

superiority based on their mythical Aryan origins became one of the nationalist responses (Bose,

2008; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Narayan, 1997). Furthermore, the Indian nationalists

claimed this authentic cultural identity, and positioned themselves as 'traditional' (Chatterjee,

1993; Mani, 1998). The postcolonial analysis revealed that what is positioned as ancient or

tradition is in fact, a modern response to colonialism. This modern or in other words, 'invented

tradition' is colonial modernity (Chakrabarty, 2000) and a deconstruction of the universal,

European modernity. SAAs in the U.S. have reappropriated these Orientalist conceptions and

invented traditions of the nationalists to construct a superior cultural identity to resist racism

against the American state and civil society as detailed in the cultural-historical perspective below

in this chapter.

Another appropriation of traditional India by Indian nationalists was by claiming

superiority over the spiritual domain while conceding the technological and material domains to

the West. According to Chatterjee (1993), the nationalists separated culture into two domains: the

material (technology and science) and the spiritual (the inner and more powerful domain) and

claimed superiority over the spiritual domain in order to challenge the attack on Indian tradition

by the dominant colonial state and Western modernity. Chatterjee argues that the twin moves

involved in the nationalist project were "to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western

civilization" while "retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national

culture" (Chatterjee, 1999, p. 238). Chatterjee argues that the nationalist response was the

construction of India as differently modern (colonial modernity) than the West by combining the

material and spiritual.

The home, religion, and race (Aryan race) became the principal sites for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women became the physical manifestation of the spiritual domain in India. Cultural authenticity was defined through women and women became the symbol of nation and culture (Mani, 1998; U. Narayan, 1997b). Thus, in the Indian nationalist movement and today in SAA society in the U.S., home and women have become the primary sites for preserving traditional India and Indian cultural identity against the modern colonial state and the U.S. imperial state.

Difference – racial and cultural – was key to the colonial condition and to the present day imperial condition, thus postcolonial theory focuses on the politics of identity and the politics of representation – who created the categories of identity, what are the consequences, who benefits, who represents whom and how do these categories get reified to perpetuate the hierarchies of domination? It takes on the fundamental liberal/colonial question - 'why are they not like us?' (M. Sinha, Personal Communication, January 17, 2008; Banton, 1998) similar to race theories (Banton, 1998). Postcolonial theory interrogates identity and the ambiguity about human subjects and their rights in the political project which is also at the heart of liberalism (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002). This ambiguity led to the justification of colonialism and its material, cultural, political, and psychological consequences which continues today in postcolonial societies. The 'civilizing mission' of the Empire was one based on civilizational hierarchy and this set up the idea of the cultural difference between the colonizer and the colonized, and the psychological need on the part of the colonized to be like the colonizer in order to be civilized, which in turn led to the complicity of the colonizer and colonized in the postcolonial condition (Fanon, 1967; Gandhi, 1998; Nandy, 1989) and the perpetuation of the hierarchies of domination in postcolonial societies, like the reification of the Aryan (race), Hindu (religion) and ancient civilization (culture) in postcolonial India and in the U.S.

Silence on Race

Colonialism and colonial legacies of the reification of Aryans, Hinduism and ancient

Indian civilization as representative of the essence or authenticity of Indians in the subcontinent

and in the U.S. are based on the foundational category of race. Yet, much of postcolonial theory

is either silent on the question of race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002) and/or ignores or dismisses

the validity of race as an analytical category (Schueller, 2003, p. 36; 56) by focusing on cultural

differences or ethnicity (Schueller, 2003) and not theorizing those cultural differences, such as

religion and caste as race (Loomba, 1998). Ghosh critiqued Subaltern Studies' silence on race in

his correspondence with Dipesh Chakrabarty, a founding member of Subaltern Studies, when he

argued that race was one of the foundational categories of thought in liberalism and imperialism,

but there is a silence about race both in liberal thought and Subaltern Studies (Ghosh &

Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 2009) even though "Race was much more than just a tool of

Empire: it was one of the foundational categories of thought that made other perceptions

possible" (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 149). Ghosh (2002), Huttenback (1976), and Loomba

(1998) argued that race was one of the justifications for colonialism in India because the 'natural'

hierarchy between the colonized and the Western colonizer, and the resulting civilizational

hierarchy was based on race. In fact, as Chakrabarty argued, the civilizational hierarchy used by

the British colonists in India was based on skin color as well as race (race was conceptualized as

more than skin color even though it was reduced to biology) rather than just culture (Ghosh &

Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 152). British Orientalist and colonial notions of civilization and modernity

were inextricably connected to race, but race was not invoked in the discourse of modernity,

civilization was (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002). Race was embedded in the practices of

colonialism (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002) and the ensuing creation and reification of hierarchies

of domination, such as of Aryan over Dravidian, Hindu over Muslim, and Brahmin over Dalit (untouchable).

Loomba (2009) argued that the undertheorization of race in postcolonial theory comes from the common assumption that race is "modern European ideology" (p. 502) based on biological notions, thus not applicable to non-Western or traditional ideas, such as communalism and casteism in India. She argued that by using the culture versus biology dichotomy, caste and religion, categories of hierarchy in colonial and postcolonial India and the Indian diaspora, were not included in the analytical category of race, since they were seen as cultural, not biological. Sarkar (2006) also contended that race race was perceived as "…roughly, a combination of three characteristics: widespread essentialization of an Other, its inferiorisation, and – above all – the ascription (and sometimes effective interpellation) of qualities assumed to be inherent, ineluctably hereditary in a word, biological" (Sarkar, 2006, p. 73). This traces back to the dominance of biology or biological difference in racial thought starting in the mid 19th century and the conception of race as the permanent difference between different groups of people. Skin color and other phenotypical characteristics or biological differences became racial markers unlike differences in religion and caste which were and still are thought to be cultural markers. Thus religion and caste were not included under the analytical category of race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Loomba, 2009). Even Ghosh who critiqued Subaltern Studies' silence on the question of race dismissed the comparison between communalism and casteism to race:

> Racism . . . is an ideology that is founded on certain ideas that relate to science,
> nature, biology and evolution—a specifically post-Enlightenment ideology in
> other words. . . . Indian communalists recognize that their conflicts are located in
> the social domain: I do not think they put a biological or scientific construction
> on them…. Similarly, racism and caste: you will perhaps remember that Louis
> Dumont distinguished between them in an appendix to Homo Hierarchicus. . . . It

has taken me a long time to understand that racism is comparable to casteism and

communalism only in that it has the same murderous effects: its internal logic is

quite different. (Ghosh as cited in Loomba, 2009, p. 517)

What this means is that communalism and casteism in the Indian context are separated from

discussions on racism and that race is defined by using enlightenment ideology and the Western

category of culture versus biology (Loomba, 2009, p. 502).

Loomba (2009) called for a broader conception of race that includes both biological and

cultural differences, thus the inclusion of both religion and caste in the Indian context. She argued

that "religion has been central to the development of modern forms of racism all across the globe"

(Loomba, 2009, p. 508) and showed the connection between culture and biology in the discourse

on religion. According to Loomba, in the premodern era, a non-Christian, Muslim was

constructed as black, for example a black Moor (Loomba, 2009, p. 504) irrelevant of his/her

phenotypical characteristics, such as skin color. This blackness was seen as fixed not fluid. This

idea was particularly important in societies where there were no phenotypical differentiations

among people in society and "religious faith was manifested in purity of blood" and "differences

in faith indicated interior essences" (Loomba, 2009, p. 506) much like the conceptualization of

race and the inherent qualities based on biological and cultural differences (Sarkar, 2006). This is

applicable in India and the SAA context where there are no phenotypical differences between

Hindus and Muslims or Brahmins and Dalits for that matter. Yet, the Hindu nationalists during

colonial times and the Hindu fundamentalists of today call on the inherent superiority of the

"original people" of India, the Aryans, or the Hindus over the 'foreign' Muslim. Thus, Loomba

argued for the inclusion of religion under the category of race to retheorize the idea of racial

difference: "by illuminating the centrality of religion and culture to the development of the idea

of race, can help us retheorize the idea of racial difference in a much more radical way" (Loomba,

2009, p. 508). Loomba called for us to

adopt a complex understanding of the relationships between the so-called social and the so-called biological discourses that are marshaled by racist discourse and practices. They underscore the point that the biological discourse of race was never really biological and that its categories were in fact always cultural, just as, on the other hand, in "premodern" racial discourse…the discourse vocabulary deployed was biological…but the categories it indicated are cultural. (Loomba, 2009, p. 509)

Loomba applied the culture versus biology binary to deconstruct the notion of caste being a uniquely Indian phenomenon that cannot be connected to the analytical category of race and to highlight the connections between caste, race and colonialism (Loomba, 2009, p. 509). She argued that caste is a particular type of racial formation in the context of India and should be interrogated as such instead of continuing to theorize it as an exceptionalism or uniquely Indian discourse of difference (Loomba, 2009, p. 510). Not only has caste been used interchangeably with race in colonial India, for example in Goa in 1567, (Loomba, 2009, p. 513), the Orientalist discourse on Aryans in 1786 that racially classified Indians as Aryans and Dravidians conjectured that the Aryans developed "the caste system as a way of preventing miscegenation with the Dravidians and aboriginals" (Loomba, 2009, p. 513). Thus "At the end of the nineteenth century…when race had become the primary mode of classifying humans into hierarchical groups in the West, caste was used to categorize Indians" (Loomba, 2009, p. 513). Thus Loomba problematized the biology/culture binary and argued that religion and caste have been used interchangeably with race historically and should be counted under the category of race. Thus, casteism and communalism is the same as racism. She suggested the comparison of race to religion and caste to combat communalism and casteism locally and then to extend the particular Indian analysis to a global scale to "productively interrupt, reorder, and fill gaps in our understanding of histories of race" (p. 518) globally.

Schueller (2003) addressed postcolonial theory's dismissal of race as a valid analytical category by proposing critical race theory as an intervention into postcolonial theory in order to make the analytical category of race more robust. She argued that postcolonial theory ignores/dismisses the validity of race as an analytical category (Schueller, 2003, p. 36) and focuses instead on cultural differences because of its preoccupation with the intellectually safe categories of culture and ethnicity in Western academy. Furthermore, in the context of the U.S., Schueller critiqued particular postcolonial theorists or those she names South Asian postcolonial theorists as focusing on global capitalism without engaging with race and racial politics (Schueller, 2003, p. 37). She stated that Bhabha and Appadurai provincialize or de-emphasize "blackness and the black-white hierarchy" and asked how this "positions SAAs and South Asian theorists in relation to race" (Schueller, 2003, p. 49). She further critiqued Spivak of unproblematically equating race, chromatism and the black/white division, and dismissing race as "simple chromatism" since it is not at the same analytical level as global capitalism for Spivak (Schueller, 2003, p. 50). Schueller (2003) argued that "in the United States questions of citizenship, rights, and national character have been fundamentally tied to race, which in turn is related, to, but not totally coincident with, skin color" (Schueller, 2003, p. 50). One of the ways she did this was by drawing on Spivak's critique of the model minority status of SAAs in the U.S. and their positioning in relation to white dominant society and other minority groups, such as blacks and latinos, which constructed them as not white or black. In other words, for Schueller race is more than skin color and it shapes and structures U.S. society as well as the rights and experiences of the people. Therefore, as a corrective to postcolonial theory's dismissal of race as an analytical category, Schueller suggested adding critical race theory as an intervention into postcolonial theory to: (a) critique the model minority positioning of SAAs and (b) envision "the possibilities for progressive identifications and alliances … with African-Americans and a basis for critiquing racial oppression" (Schueller, 2003, p. 55) based on difference. Schueller explains

that the model minority positioning of SAAs which constructs them as subordinate to white

dominant society accomplishes two things: (a) it does not threaten the construction of white as the

norm (b) while getting SAAs to function similarly to other Asian Americans "to be not black"

(Chin as cited in Schueller, 2003, p. 55) and construct themselves in response to blackness

(Morrison as cited in Schueller, 2003, p. 55). This continues to uphold the saliency of the

black/white paradigm by giving meaning and significance to the racial identities black and white.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Following Schueller (2003), I use critical race theory (CRT) as an intervention into

postcolonial theory since race is a key and valid analytical category in CRT. The two defining

elements of CRT are that (a) race is a central organizing principle of U.S. society and (b) racism

is a normal and ordinary part of U.S. society, not aberrant (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012; A.

Harris, 2001; Stefancic & Delgado, 2000). CRT, a political and intellectual movement that has its

origins in the U.S. legal field, "seeks to transform the relationship among race, racism, and

power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 159). In other words, CRT seeks to fight for racial justice

intellectually, materially, politically, and through activism. The breadth and scope of the

movement has now spread to many other fields (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012), including

adult education (Closson, 2010a). There are also many off shoots of critical race theorists known

as race crits or crits, (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012), such as AsianCrit (focusing on Asian

Americans, especially East Asians), LatCrit (focusing on Latinos), critical white studies (focusing

on whites), and the newly formed DesiCrit (Harpalani, 2013; focusing on South Asian

Americans). In this study, I use the following crits: Harpalani (2003, 2013); Delgado and

Stefancic (2005, 2012); Omi and Winant (1994); Lopez (1994); Goldberg (1993, 2009), and

Taylor (2013).

Schueller (2003) suggested adding these three characteristics of CRT to the postcolonial analysis (pp. 52-55): (a) race as a social construction, (b) the centrality of race in U.S. society, and (c) "call to context" or critique of universalism (Schueller, 2003, p. 54). I added two other characteristics: interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012; Harpalani, 2003; Stefancic & Delgado, 2000) and differential racialization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012). I briefly explain each of them below.

First, race is a not a biological given, it is a social construction. Race is not an essence - fixed, concrete or objective (Fields 1982; Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 54). Yet, it is not merely an illusion, a mere ideological construct (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 54). Race and racial categories are products of changing social thought and social interactions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Hence, race and racial categories are meaningful only in the their cultural and historical context. In other words, race is always socially and "historically situated" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 61). Second, the concept of race has become "a "common sense" way of comprehending, explaining and acting in the world" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 60). It is a "fundamental dimension of social organization and cultural meaning in the United States of America" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. viii). Race is important in American state, civil society, and politics today as it has been in the past. It "continues to shape both personal identities and institutions in significant ways" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. vii). It is central to the U.S. society. Third, CRT challenges racism by critiquing universalism and focusing on the particular or as the crits put it, "call to context" (Schueller, 2003; Stefancic & Delgado, 2000). To illustrate, Schueller's (2003) suggests focusing on the local and looking at SAAs as model minorities in the U.S. instead of looking at them globally as part of the South Asian diaspora to narrow the analysis. This would give a local and particular racialized narrative of the SAA experience in the U.S. to fight for racial justice in the U.S. as opposed to the diasporic experience. Fourth, the convergence of interest thesis promoted by Derrick Bell states that racial progress of blacks in the U.S. will be tolerated and allowed by white elites only if it

benefits their self interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012; Harpalani, 2003; Stefancic &

Delgado, 2000). Fifth, differential racialization "holds that the various racial groups in the United

States…have been racialized in different ways in response to different needs of the majority

group" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, para. 14) and the labor market (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The histories and struggles of the different racial groups are varied and have changed over time,

and will continue to change. For example, Asian Indians were seen as the most inassimilable of

all races in the early 1900s when they arrived in the time of the Asian Exclusion Acts, but in 1965

became the model minority when Indian immigrants filled U.S. market needs for doctors,

scientists, etc. The treatment of those elite immigrants is much different from the stereotyping of

SAAs terrorists after 9/11. Therefore, racial categorization and signification affects the allocation

of material and symbolic resources as well as political and social rights in the U.S. That is why

Omi and Winant (1994) define race as: "*a concept that signifies and symbolizes racial conflicts

and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*" (p. 55; italics in original).

Race, Racial Formation, Racialization and Racism

Drawing on critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, 2012; Goldberg, 1993,

2009; Harpalani, 2003, 2013; Omi & Winant, 1994; Taylor, 2013) and theorization of racial

thought in South Asia (Ballantyne, 2002; Leopold, 1970, 1974; Robb, 1997; Sarkar, 2006;

Trautmann, 2004), I define race socially, not biologically, since there is no biological basis to

race (Graves, 2015). Thus the social definitions of race vary depending on the context (Graves,

2015, para. 7). I use Graves (2015) definition of race: Race is an arbitrary combination of certain

physical and social characteristics, the characteristics and combination are dependent on the

context, to categorize human beings and this categorization "*always operate[s] in the service of

social-dominance hierarchies*"(para. 7; italics in original). Therefore, race is fluid. Race is *"an*

unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by social struggle"(Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 68; emphasis in original). It is a process and product of social thought and social relations, and it is always politically contested (Omi & Winant, 1994). To illustrate, the participants in this study are categorized racially as SAA in a predominantly white region in the U.S. based on a combination of physical and social characteristics such as skin color, hair color, religion, caste, and perceived/ascribed nationality (see Chapter 5). This SAA racial category is both an identity (a label that is given to the participants) and an identification (a label that is used by participants to self-identify themselves) in this study. Thus race, a social category devised by humans and not by nature, is a relational term that is meaningful only in terms of intergroup and intragroup social relations. Race is always socially and "historically situated" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 61).

According to Omi and Winant (1994), racial formation is a "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (p. 55). But, "crucial to this formulation is the treatment of race as a *central axis* of social relations which cannot be subsumed under or reduced to some broader category" (Omi & Winant, 1986, pp. 61-62; italics in original). Like race, racial formation is politically and historically situated, thus changes over time (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 61). This process of political contestation forms, changes, disrupts, transforms and reforms racial categories over time, thus racial formation becomes a social, historical and political process. To illustrate, after the 1923 United States v Thind case, Asian Indians were no longer eligible to become citizens because they were considered not "White persons" under the Naturalization Law of 1790. Yet, they were classified as White in the 1970 Census (Harpalani, 2013, p. 105).

Racism is complicated and complex, and difficult to define. Racism, like race, is not fixed or concrete, and changes over time. As Omi and Winant (1994) note, "A racial project can be defined as *racist* if … it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist*

categories of race" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 71; italics in original). Racism operates by marking

and categorizing certain human differences as *other* and inferiorizing the *other* by ascribing

essentialized or inherent qualities based on certain combination of physical and social differences

(Sarkar, 2006) to the benefit of the dominant group which is marked and categorized as *normal,*

thus inherently superior. Racial ideology and social structure "mutually shape the nature of

racism in a complex, dialectical and overdetermined manner" (Omi & Winant, 1994, pp. 74 - 75).

Racialization refers to cultural and political processes or situations in which race is invoked as an

explanation as well as to specific ideological practices in which race is deployed (Murji &

Solomos, 2005). Racialization is defined as the "processes by which ideas about race are

constructed, come to be regarded as meaningful, and are acted upon" (Murji & Solomos, 2005, p.

1). I borrow from Taylor (2013) to define race thinking and race talk. Race thinking is "a way of

assigning generic meaning" (Taylor, 2013, p. 16) to human differences, such as thinking all

Muslims or SAAs are terrorists. Race talk is race discourse.

Three Perspectives on the SAA Racialized Experience

The scholarship on the SAA racialized experience in the U.S. can be categorized into

three broad overlapping perspectives: historical (Chandrasekhar, 1982b; Jensen, 1988; V. Lal,

2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), historical-materialist (Harpalani, 2003; Prashad, 2000), and

social-cultural (Abraham, 2006; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; U. Narayan, 1997b;

Prashad, 2000). All three perspectives focus on the exclusion and discrimination of SAAs by state

and civil society – the subordination of SAAs on the basis of their national origins, race, and

culture, and their responses to this subordination. The historical and historical-materialist

perspectives locate SAA immigration in the context of Asian American immigration and clearly

show the connection between racism, economics (labor needs), and the resulting enactment of

immigration legislation by the state based on race and national origins. While both the historical and historical-materialist perspectives focus on the actions of the state and civil society (Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), the historical-materialist perspective sharpens the analysis by adding capitalism to show how labor needs driven by the market influenced immigration policy and determined the nature, composition, and rights of SAAs (Harpalani, 2003; Prashad, 2000). The social-cultural perspective, on the other hand, uses the lens of culture to critically examine the racial, cultural, and religious identities constructed by SAAs as a response to their subordination by American state and civil society (Abraham, 2006; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000). The narratives told by each perspective are partial, although there is an attempt in the social-cultural perspective to integrate the lens of culture, history and capital for a more detailed and nuanced study of the experiences of SAAs. However, it is important to note that even though I categorize these as three different perspectives, they are not mutually exclusive (some of the scholars, Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989, adopt all three perspectives); they critically build on each other and differ due to their area of focus and analytical lens.

Although it is clear from the scholarship that the South Asian American experience in the U.S. has been shaped by race, their racialized experiences are muted and there is ambiguity over the notions of race and the origins of South Asian American racism in the literature. The narratives of the racialized experiences of SAAs are partial, incomplete, and limited in their scope and breadth, because (a) SAAs are treated as objects who may only be reactive to dominant society and culture and (b) their experiences are flattened and homogenized without acknowledgment of their differences, multiple realities, and/or multiple perspectives. First, since the focus in the literature so far has been on the subordination of SAAs and their responses to it, the American state and civil society are positioned as the subjects or actors as opposed to the SAAs who are located as the 'acted-upon,' the objects without agency. The historical perspective

focuses on the actions of the state while the historical-materialist perspective focuses on the actions of civil society – the market and dominant white society. Even though the social-cultural perspective acknowledges the responses of SAAs to the American state and civil society, the perspective is limited by positioning those responses as *inevitable reactions* and not as agentive acts. Bhatia (2007) argues in his study about first generation, middle class SAA professionals that their assertions of "sameness and universal humanity" as a response to their racial *othering* are "deliberate acts of agency"(p. 3). But this is one study focused on professionals and is not representative of the diverse groups of SAAs in the country. According to the literature, the racialized experiences of SAAs in this country began with the history of discrimination and prejudice against them by the American state and civil society and their resulting exclusion from this country in the early1900s (Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Takaki, 1989) and continues today with the subordination of SAAs by dominant American white society (Bhatia, 2007; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Murti, 2010; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), increasing anti-South Asian racial violence (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989), especially after 9/11, and discrimination against them based on color-prejudice and racism in the workplace and civil society (Bhatia, 2007; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Murti, 2010; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). In response, SAAs have reacted in racist ways to the racist state and civil society (Mazumdar, 1989). This portrayal erases the agency of SAAs. The South Asian American experience in the U.S. is not a homogenous experience; it is rich, complex, and complicated, and it is co-constituted by the American state, civil society, and SAAs themselves, not just by the state and civil society. SAAs are subjects with agency whose voices have not been foregrounded.

Second, although the nature, composition, rights, and experiences of SAAs have been historically, materially, and socio-culturally shaped by race, "there is a real uncertainty over the question of race and racism, much of which has to do with the lack of attention paid to race in

South Asian scholarship" (Prashad, 2000, p. 98). Even though the two main themes used in the literature, the controversial model minority thesis (Abraham, 2006; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989) and the mythical Aryan race (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989), are both racialized themes, there seems to be an uncertainty about using the concept of race to understand and describe the SAA experience. The notions of caste, color consciousness, and religion among SAAs do not seem to be perceived as being connected to race (Ghosh & Chakrabarty, 2002; Prashad, 2000; Schueller, 2003) and the scholarship does not seem to go beyond Aryan race theory when critiquing the racial identity construction of SAAs. Furthermore, SAAs are positioned in a binary when it comes to racism – either they are racist (Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000) or they are not (i.e. the victims of racism; Takaki, 1989); there is no middle ground. The complexity of their racialized experiences is missing from the discourse. Moreover, there is an ambiguity in the literature over the origins and nature of SAA racism. Specifically, there is no agreement whether the racist traditions of SAAs have their origins in the Indian subcontinent or in the U.S. (Prashad, 2000). Therefore, there is a need to empirically explore the racialized experiences of SAAs to not only better understand the notion of race and racism among SAAs, but to more importantly recover and include their voices, agency, and richness of experiences in American history.

Historical Perspective: Racist State and Civil Society

The historical perspective, the earliest account of SAAs, focuses on the actions of the state and civil society, and recovers and recounts the history of SAAs. It contextualizes the SAA experience by locating their history in the broader economic and political context of Asian American immigration and history in the U.S. (Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). Thus, racism against SAAs in the early 1900s is situated in the bigger picture of

labor competition and racism by white labor and white civil society against Asians, including South Asians in the West Coast.

South Asian pioneers: Discrimination and exclusion based on culture

Asian labor immigration to the U.S. started in the mid-1800s, when Asians were recruited to work as laborers in the West Coast and Hawaii to keep labor prices competitive and control the labor force through a divide and control policy (Takaki, 1989). Many of the Asians were not welcome on arrival and were seen as *other* or strangers by white labor and white dominant society. They were seen as the "Yellow Peril" (Prashad, 2000: Takaki, 1989) due to their increasing numbers and their threat to white labor. According to Chandrasekhar (1982), this set the stage for discrimination against Asians for years to come. South Asian immigrants arrived in this atmosphere of anti-Asian sentiment based on race and labor competition, and faced widespread hostility and discrimination and demands for exclusion and reduction of their political and economic rights almost immediately upon their arrival in 1907 (Chandrasekhar, 1982b; Mazumdar, 1989; Takaki, 1989).

According to Takaki (1989), SAAs were perceived as an invasion of the "Dark Caucasians" or the "Turbaned Tide" (p. 295), and were treated as different and as *other* in terms of their skin color, manner of dress (i.e. men wearing turbans), religions, traditions, and customs by dominant white society (Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Takaki, 1989). South Asian labor was wanted by industry, yet perceived as competition by white labor in the West Coast, thus there was increasing pressure to restrict their immigration and exclude them from this country (Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Takaki, 1989). "Asian Indians were especially feared as labor competitors by white workers and were often victimized by white working-class antagonism and violence" (Takaki, 1989, p. 297). Unfortunately for the South Asians, they were

blamed for the violence – for working for low wages and their filthy habits and moral degradation

attributed to their race – by the Asiatic Exclusion League (Chandrasekhar, 1982, p. 29; Jensen,

1988; Takaki, 1989; Harpalani, 2003). The Asiatic Exclusion League used the colonial stereotype

of the barbaric and uncivilized 'Indian' – the Aryan brothers and sisters from the East who were

in moral and racial decline (Metcalf, 1998), to push for their exclusion from the U.S. Although

South Asians were seen as Caucasians, the same race as white dominant society, the Asiatic

Exclusion League saw them as different from their 'brothers' in the West because they were dark

and morally degraded by living in the East.

The political interests of the exclusionists and dominant white society converging with

the economic interests of white labor resulted in the legal exclusion and restriction of Asian

immigration, including South Asians, through the passing and enactment of immigration

legislation based on race and national origins like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the

Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917 (Harpalani, 2003; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). The Asiatic

Barred Zone Act or the Immigration Act of 1917 designated the Pacific Barred Zone (Harpalani,

2003; Jensen, 1988; Lal 2008; Takaki, 1989) which restricted and barred all Asian immigration,

including South Asian immigration for more than 20 years.

Once South Asians were excluded from the U.S., citizenship rights became the next racist

endeavor against them by the state, and this involved their skin color and race. Even though South

Asians were barred from entry into the country, they could still become naturalized U.S. citizens

(unlike some of the other Asians) because of their racial classification in the U.S. as Aryan or

Caucasian. Aryan or Caucasian was synonymous with 'free white person,' thus they were eligible

for citizenship (Harpalani, 2003). In 1923, in the Bhagad Singh Thind case, the Supreme Court

ruled that even though South Asians were racially classified as Aryans or Caucasians, they were

not 'white' by common definition. Thus on the basis of the Thind decision, South Asians "ceased

to be Americans" (V. Lal, 2008, p. 39). They were no longer eligible for naturalization rights

because of their skin color, that is they were not white; and their citizenship rights were annulled (Chandrasekhar, 1982; Harpalani, 2003; Mazumdar, 1989).

The historical perspective concludes that both the state and civil society are racist (Chandrasekhar, 1982a; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). The state is named as racist, because immigration policy was formulated on the basis of race and national origins privileging white immigrants in terms of entry into the country and citizenship rights until 1965 (Chandrasekhar, 1982a; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). Civil society is named as racist, because Asians, including South Asians, were seen as *other* because they were not white or in other words, not American (Chandrasekhar, 1982b; Jensen, 1988; Takaki, 1989). The discrimination by civil society based on *othering* led to the regulation, limitation, and/or exclusion of the *other* from the country. The historical perspective tries to recover the history of SAAs. Chandrasekhar (1982b), Harpalani (2003), Jensen (1988), Mazumdar (1989), and Takaki (1989) illustrate how the American state in response to demands by white labor and white dominant society subordinated SAAs through cultural imperialism enacted through racist policies, including immigration laws. However, this perspective erases the agency of SAAs by only looking at the actions of the state and civil society as agentive acts and not the actions of South Asians, including their fight against racism and cultural domination as well as their rights to immigration, citizenship, and work, as agentive acts. Their acts were only seen as responses to white dominance and racism. Furthermore, what is not emphasized in this analysis is the importance of capitalism and how labor needs driven by the market has determined the presence, composition, and rights of SAAs, including the creation and perpetuation of anti-South Asian racism as demonstrated in the historical-materialist perspective next.

Historical-Materialist Perspective: Market Needs

The historical-materialist perspective builds on the historical perspective and uses capitalism to bring to light that labor needs dictated immigration policy in many ways, and illustrates how SAAs like other immigrant groups were primarily wanted in this country for their labor, not their lives (Prashad, 2000). While Prashad (2000) argues that market needs determined the presence and rights of South Asians in the U.S., Harpalani (2003) builds on Prashad and argues that it was the convergence of interests between the market, the American state, white dominant society, and South Asians that determined their presence in the U.S. One of the main themes used in this analysis is the model minority thesis (MMT), since the highly educated and skilled SAA immigrants post-1965 were typecast as the model minority by dominant white society – embodying the American ideals of family values and education "while simultaneously adopting the principles of modern American capitalism" (Abraham, 2006, p. 200).

Convergence of interests

On the surface, the entry, composition, and rights of SAAs seem to be determined by the American state through immigration legislation. But Harpalani (2003) argued that it was the coming together of the political interests of the exclusionists and dominant white society combined with the economic interests of white labor which resulted in the legal exclusion and restriction of Asian immigration, including South Asians, thorough the passing and enactment of immigration legislation based on race and national origins like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917 (Harpalani, 2003; Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). Then in 1946 and 1965, due to the convergence of political, economic, and moral interests of the state and people, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1946 and 1965, which opened up immigration and granted naturalization rights to South Asians (Chandrasekhar,

1982; Harpalani, 2003; Takaki, 1989), thus changing the history of SAAs in the U.S. The

Immigration Act of 1946 granted naturalization rights to Asians, including South Asians

(Chandrasekhar, 1982; Harpalani, 2003; Takaki, 1989) by setting a small annual immigration

quota of 100 for South Asian immigrants and making South Asians racially eligible for

naturalization rights once again after 1923. It was a political move by the state "to dull the edge

of Japanese propaganda" (Takaki, p. 368) against the U.S. and mitigate against Nazi ideology

(Harpalani, 2003), and economically geared to get access to the Chinese and Indian market for

U.S. goods. This was also an endeavor to regain America's moral superiority and demonstrate

that the U.S. was not discriminating against whole nations and people on the basis of race and

national origins (V. Lal, 2008). This act tried to ameliorate the racism of American state and civil

society.

The Immigration Act of 1965 finally abolished the national origins quota, placed Asian

countries, including India on an equal footing with countries from the Western hemisphere, and

most importantly for South Asians, based immigration on skills not on national origins or race

(Harpalani, 2003; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000). The annual immigration quota was increased to a

maximum of 20,000 South Asians excluding allowances for family reunification. It also

established a separate quota for professional and technical workers and gave preference to highly

skilled, professional immigrants.

According to Prashad (2000) and Harpalani (2003), the 1965 Immigration Act was

passed in order to address two main problems in the U.S.: first, to tackle the lack of highly skilled

professionals in areas such as medicine and science affecting America's competitiveness with

Soviet technology and the world market (Harpalani, 2003; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki,

1989) and second, to rectify the institutional racism based on national origins and race against

minority groups during the period of the civil rights movement (Harpalani, 2003, p. 12). Thus, the

second wave of South Asian immigrants post-1965 was the professionals and technical workers

who were needed for this country to be competitive globally. This post-1965 immigration
completely transformed and renewed the SAA population in the U.S., because the majority of
professionals and technical workers that migrated here in that period were South Asians from
India (V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). As Prashad (2000) enumerates:

> Between 1966 and 1977, of the Indian Americans who migrated to the United States,
> 83% entered under the occupational category of professional and technical workers
> (roughly 20,000 scientists with Ph.D.'s, 40,000 engineers, and 25,000 doctors). These
> early migrations of technical workers came mainly from India…. The sheer number of
> technical workers startles most people and many assumed that Indians are generally
> predisposed to the scientific and medical professions. (Prashad, 2000, p. 75)

By 1975, "93% of the South Asians in the U.S. were classified as professional/technical workers"
in the census (V. Lal, 2008, p. 54).

As American technology got more competitive, the demand for technical and
professional workers decreased in the U.S., and the Immigration and Nationality Amendment Act
of 1976 tightened the 1965 provision targeting professional and technical workers. Therefore,
there was a reduction in the number of South Asian professional and technical workers entering
the country and an increase in the number coming here to be reunited with family (Prashad,
2000). The third wave, starting in the 1980s and after, is made up of mostly uneducated, working
class people similar to the first wave of the early 1900s and unlike the 'model minority'
professional and technical workers of the second wave. This again is the result of the convergence
of interests between state, the labor market, and dominant society.

South Asian Americans as model minorities

The post-1965 highly educated and skilled SAA immigrants typecast as "model

minorities" are essentialized as an inherently highly achieving group and positioned as the solution to America's racial and labor problems (Abraham, 2006; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). According to Prashad (2000), implicit in this naming is an assumption that these professional and technical attributes were inherent to SAAs, as opposed to other 'less achieving groups' in the U.S. like blacks and latinos. In other words, the SAA model minority identity was 'to be not black or latino.'

Prashad (2000) and Harpalani (2007) demystify the model minority myth (MMT) by using the lens of capitalism to reveal the connection between the Immigration Act of 1965 and the present day composition of highly skilled SAAs. Harpalani (2007) argues that it is "the classist policies of the 1965 Immigration Act" (p. 16) which has created this artificial population of highly educated, professional SAAs in the U. S. while Prashad (2000) extends it by arguing that this filtering process of the state is driven by market needs.

Prashad (2000) also points out that even though SAAs are positioned as solutions, they are only wanted in the U.S. for their labor. SAAs and the other Asian Americans who make up this model minority seem to pose a double threat to American civil society – in terms of numbers and professional accomplishment – and are pitted against the black and latino under class as well as "the eroding white middle class" (Takaki, 1989, p. 478). According to Prashad (2000):

> The Asian presence in the United States is treated as a peril of the body ("yellow peril") and a peril of the mind ("model minority"). The former refers to the fact of exponential Asian bodies entering the territory. The latter refers to the fact of Asian success, that is, the fact that Asians are no longer assumed to be "coolies" but are instead successful, something unacceptable. (Kerry Okihiro as cited on pp. 106-107)

 As Prashad (2000) contends, "Immigrants can work, but if they choose to enact their cultural resources they may face anti-immigrant wrath" (p. 87). SAAs experience racial violence against persons and property.

In New Jersey, a number of Indians were violently attacked by young white men who

flamboyantly described themselves as "dotbusters," the dot reference to the bindi placed

by some Hindu women on their forehead between the eyebrows. Indian businesses were

vandalized; women were molested; and thirty-year old Citicorp executive Navroze Mody

was bludgeoned to death. (V. Lal, 2008, p. 61)

Racism and discrimination against SAAs based on color-prejudice has also been on the

rise (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989, p. 52; Takaki, 1989) due to their increased visibility and

success. According to Murti (2010), SAAs of Indian origin (0.09% of the total US population)

make up nearly seven percent of one of this nation's most prestigious occupations – physicians

(Murti, 2010, p. viii), and even this success does not protect them against racism at the

institutional and individual level. The SAA physicians in Southern California experience

occupational privilege in the professional context, but once they take off their white coats, they

become the non-white *other* who are stopped by police officers while driving ("Driving While

Brown;" Mucchetti, 2005 as cited by Murti, 2010, p. 86), suspected of being Muslim terrorists,

criminals or gang members (Murti, 2010, p. 93) depending on the social context. Furthermore,

Murti (2010) argues that both immigrant and first generation (U.S.-born) SAA physicians face

institutional discrimination due to structural inequalities in U.S. medicine (p. 60) due to SAAs

being stereotyped as "perpetual foreigners" and "model minorities (p. 71). She states that her

respondents repeatedly mentioned "the glass ceilings that prevent the selection of FMGs [Foreign

Medical Graduates] for administrative positions; and … Indian-American doctors having to prove

that their knowledge and credentials are equal or better than those of white doctors" (p. 60).

The contribution of the historical-materialist perspective demystifies the MMT and the

artificial composition of the SAAs, thereby de-essentializing the professional, technical and

academic abilities of this group due to "The sheer number of technical workers … many assumed

that Indians are generally predisposed to the scientific and medical professions" (Prashad, 2000,

p. 75). It exposes the role of the state as a 'filter' based on market needs disguised as moral and ethical imperatives. The racism faced by the first wave seems to be rearing its ugly head once more and the prejudice and discrimination based on skin color and different ways of being or culture is becoming a part of their daily lives. This could be in part because the class composition of the post 1980s third wave resembles the first wave. However, the historical-materialist perspective like the historical perspective focuses on the state and civil society, thus erasing the agency of SAAs and failing to show how they have resisted, accommodated, and appropriated the minority model label for their purposes as demonstrated by the social-cultural perspective next.

Social-cultural Perspective: Responses to Subordination

The third perspective, the social-cultural perspective, uses the lens of culture to analyze the experiences of SAAs and explicitly critiques the racist responses of some SAAs to the racist state and civil society (Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000) by categorizing them in the following themes: (a) constructing a racial identity invoking their mythical Aryan racial origins (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989); (b) constructing a cultural identity that reifies ancient Indian culture and civilization and using cultural politics to represent themselves politically (Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Narayan, 1997; Prashad, 2000); and (c) constructing a radical Hindu identity based on reinvented Hinduism and the Yankee Hindutva (Hindu Right in the U.S.; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000). To further sharpen the analysis, Narayan (1997) and Abraham (2006) showed how women are constrained to particular roles as carriers and transmitters of SAA culture and become a site on which SAA subordination is accommodated, challenged and resisted. This perspective contextualizes the SAA experience historically and culturally by connecting it to colonialism, anti-colonial struggle, Indian nationalism, the Orientalist imagination, and the Indian diaspora. The main crux of the argument

is how Indian culture, portrayed as a tool for racial emancipation of SAAs by SAAs in the U.S., becomes a tool for oppression further perpetuating inequalities against marginalized groups amongst SAAS (V. Lal, 2008; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000) as well as other racial groups in the U.S.

Racial identity: Aryan myth

The proponents of the social-cultural perspective (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989) argue that SAAs have faced and still face institutional and systematic racism and discrimination in this country and in turn, some of them have responded by constructing a racial identity based on their mythical Aryan origins, their reified culture and religion (Hinduism), and color-prejudice that is racist not only against white dominant society and other racial minorities in this country, but also against the marginalized groups within the SAA community itself. Thus, many of the SAA experiences in this country seem shaped by race and is a racist response to racism (Mazumdar, 1989) – racist state, racist dominant society, racism of SAAs against other minority groups like the blacks and latinos, and racism of the SAAs against other SAAs.

In the literature, there are two explanations for SAA racism based on Aryan race theory originating from the British Orientalist and Indian nationalist discourses from the Indian subcontinent: the biological explanation and the cultural explanation (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000). The biological explanation builds on Aryan race theory and invokes the mythical Aryan racial origins of Indians to position SAAs as Caucasian or white, therefore the same as, equal to, or superior to white Americans, and superior to the other minority groups in the U.S. as well as other non-Aryans within the SAA group (Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000). The cultural explanation invokes the ancient Indian civilization - the mystical,

spiritual India of the British Orientalist imagination dating back to the first 'Indian Civilization' and how the people who have their roots in this ancient civilization are inherently spiritually and culturally superior to all Americans, including dominant white society (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; Narayan, 1997).

Aryan race theory in the context of India conflates Aryan with ancient Indian race, ancient Indian civilization and Indian religion – Hinduism (Ballantyne, 2002; Leopold, 1970, 1974; Mazumdar, 1989; Trautmann, 2004). The discovery of the Indo-European language family, later seen as same as the Indo-European race (Aryan), situated Hinduism and Brahmins as Aryan. Thus the Brahmins, the highest caste, became synonymous with Aryan, and Hinduism became conflated with ancient Indian religion and Indian culture. Aryan race theory was also invoked by British Orientalists to explain the "origins of 'Indian Civilization'" (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 48); ancient Indian civilization was equated with Aryan civilization. These Orientalist conceptions were then appropriated by Indian nationalists during colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, and particular groups of Indians claimed to be Aryans to not only claim equality with the colonizer, but to also claim caste/class/race superiority over other Indians, thereby subordinating them (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 49).

According to Mazumdar (1989), this mythical Aryan racial identity appropriated by the Hindu nationalists and high caste Hindus in the subcontinent has been and is being claimed by some SAAs in the U.S. as well to combat racism and discrimination against them. This use of their mythical racial Aryan origins by SAAs needs to be historically contextualized in the U.S. before talking about the present. As mentioned in the historical perspective above, South Asians were categorized as Caucasian due to their mythic Aryan origins from the beginning of their immigration to the U.S. in the early 1900s and thus were eligible for naturalized citizenship when other Asians were not. Thus, racial identity, based on their mythical Aryan racial origins, became important to South Asians in this climate of institutional racism against them (Mazumdar, 1989;

Prashad, 2000) and claiming an Aryan identity became their racist response to a racist state

(Mazumdar, 1989). For many, this racism and color-prejudice against them made them cling

tighter to the myth of their Aryan origins by claiming "purity of blood" (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 50)

and caste/class/race superiority (Mazumdar, 1989). For example, the first wave invoked their

Aryan heritage and claimed purity of blood or their high-caste (Aryan) status in order to obtain

citizenship as a white person. Those South Asians did not just resist the racism of the state; they

strategically appropriated the conceptions of the racist state like the Indian nationalists in the

subcontinent and used it in their struggle against racism. According to Murti (2010), today

immigrant Indian physicians invoke caste/class to counter racist behavior and attitudes toward

them.

> These doctors depend on the hierarchical caste framework of India to structure their
>
> understanding of the racial prejudice and discrimination they experience in the U.S. By
>
> invoking the hierarchical language of caste to rank racist white Americans as inferior to
>
> them, first-generation Indian immigrant doctors interpret racism as an individual problem
>
> of "low class" or "low culture" (Murti, 2010, p. 112).

But, according to Mazumdar (1989), for some it was not to fight against racism, it was an effort

to demonstrate their superiority over white dominant society. "South Asians saw themselves as

"Aryan" and therefore "Caucasian" and "white" despite the fact that already plenty of evidence

existed to the contrary" (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 50).

> Instead of challenging racism, the South Asian struggle became an individualized and
>
> personalized mission to prove that they were of "pure-blood Aryan stock." Though
>
> victimized by white racism, which denied them citizenship, the South Asian response was
>
> equally racist…. there are "those Indians… who really think of themselves as more
>
> 'white' than the 'whites,' indeed as the descendants from that pure Aryan family of
>
> prehistoric times. (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 50).

According to Mazumdar (1989) and Prashad (2000), this continues even today. Many of the educated and professional SAAs are complicit with white dominance and racist endeavors against other racial minorities and working class SAAs by accepting and appropriating the model minority label (Abraham, 2006; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989).

South Asian Americans provide a role model for success, and too many of us uncritically adopt that role without conscious reflection on the political and racial project to which it is hitched…. unaware of how we are used as a weapon by those whom we ourselves fear and yet emulate. (Prashad, 2000, p.8)

The MMT implies that SAAs are inherently superior to other minority groups instead of revealing that they are an artificial group created by the immigration filters of the state (Prashad, 2000, p.169). Thus, the MMT is a subtle or "invisible" racist endeavor, because paying tribute to "Asian intelligence" at the expense of other marginalized groups like blacks and latinos makes one immune from charges of racism (Prashad, 2000, p. 170). It is not considered to be offensive (Prashad, 2000) even though it is an attack on other groups. It is not seen as racist or even acknowledged as racist even though the MMT elevates SAAs as the model minority at the expense of other minorities. This has caused division among the racial minorities, thus perpetuating the 'divide and rule' policy and further perpetuating the myth of Aryan race superiority. "This stereotype is a godsend for *desis* [SAAs]. It provided them with an avenue toward advancement, despite its negative impact on blacks and the strengthening of white supremacy" (Prashad, 2000, p. 170) in addition to the racist divisions within the SAA community itself. It is a sort of updating of the Aryan myth for modern times (M. Sinha, personal communication, December, 15, 2009).

The professionals or model minority group who had a modicum of protection against racism due to their educational and professional accomplishments, now are trying to maintain that protection in the current environment of increasing anti-South Asian American discrimination

and racial violence, especially post 9/11 by trying to differentiate themselves from the newer wave of working class SAAs post 1980s (V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989). The image of the SAA as a model minority or the "good immigrant" (Prashad, 2000, p.82) who were seen as inherently intelligent, science-oriented, high achieving, financially successful and embodying the Americans ideals is starting to fracture due to the influx of the uneducated, lower class immigrants and this, in turn, is increasing conflict within the SAA community itself.

> Our desi brethren on the Upper East Side of Manhattan bemoan the fact that almost 50 percent of the taxi workers are now from South Asia. These cabbies, noted one such professional, are "lowering the tone." They are "spoiling things for us," even "ruining our image" in the United States…. This act of differentiation among the self-appointed cream of the desi community is a screen against the racism….The new working-class migration is turning *us* into Mexicans! (Prashad, 2000, p. 82; italics in original)

Mazumdar (1989) indicted SAA professionals as being racist by claiming: "Yet despite…these high levels of education, there seems to have been little change in the political consciousness of South Asians regarding questions of race" (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 50). They are trying to prove that they are more white than the whites and invoking their Aryan origin even though white dominant society and the racist state sees all SAAs as the same – 'less than' due to the color of their skin – black (Mazumdar, 1989). According to Mazumdar (1989), what is troubling is that they are continuing the use of racist "arguments used by an earlier generation of Asian Indian immigrants" (p.53) instead of fighting racism and color prejudice.

Prashad (2000) acknowledged that not all SAAs respond the same way and "there is no single South Asian approach" (p. 99). Bhatia (2007) claimed that first generation, middle class SAA professionals recognize that they are racially and culturally *othered* by whites, but deny their marginalization through assertions of "sameness and universal humanity" and meritocracy (p. 3). Murti (2010) differentiated between the responses of immigrant and U.S.-born physicians

and although the immigrants deny racism against them and invoke low caste/class as a justification for white racist behavior, the U.S.-born physicians recognize racism and respond to it by invoking their privileged occupational identity and using their material occupational markings, such as the white physician's coat. One of her participants reported driving with the white coat draped on the back of the driver's seat (Murti, 2010, p. 89) in case he is stopped by police for "Driving While Brown" (DWB; Mucchetti 2005 as cited in Murti, 2010, p. 86).

Prashad (2000) nuanced the discussion of SAA racism by bringing in the construction of the SAA identity in opposition to blackness and the ambiguity of the origins and nature of SAA racism in their quest to construct an identity and find a place in American society.

> There is a temptation to assume that desis know the net effects of antiblack racism and
> see that it is to their benefit to trumpet the model minority thesis…. There was also an
> attraction to the thesis that desis have a racist tradition that can be seen in the mysteries of
> the caste complex. It may be that some desis are rational in their discrimination (to gain
> at the expense of blacks) or that some simply live within a racist cultural matrix (forged
> by an adherence to the stereotypes of blacks as culturally inferior). The majority do not
> hold these views but simply go in search of a coherent identity as a way to be a desi in the
> United States….If we desis are racist, we tend to think, then we must either reject
> desiness entirely or come to grips with this as part of our culture. (p. 177)

In the literature, there is no agreement if SAAs come to this country with a racist tradition that is different from white dominant racism or if their racism is the response and/or accommodation to the racist tradition in this country which seems to consider certain groups who are not white *other* or 'less than' (Prashad, 2000). Mazumdar (1989) and Prashad (2000) acknowledge the color consciousness and ensuing color prejudice of SAAs and their racist attitudes towards blacks. Mazumdar (1989) indicts both South Asian and U.S. racist traditions for the racist responses of the SAAs, such as them claiming to be white by invoking the myth of their Aryan race origins,

not identifying their skin color as black, and perpetuating the class-caste biases based on race and color-prejudice from their countries of origin here in the U.S. (Mazumdar, 1989). Mazumdar (1989) argues that South Asians are seen as black due to their darker skin color by whites and the lighter skinned Asians. Prashad (2000) on the other hand, seems to assume South Asian racism is an accommodation to U.S. racist tradition and contrasts his views against "Dinesh D'Souza [who] has suggested that desis have a strong racist consciousness that is independent of U.S. racism" (Prashad, 2000, p. 94). Prashad (2000) proceeds to ask, "There is indeed a consciousness of color among desi peoples, but is this the same as racism? Are these older awarenesses of color differences identical to the racial divisions and hierarchies that plague the United States" (Prashad, 2000, p. 94)? Is color prejudice and associated color consciousness of SAAs that originates from the subcontinent the same as American racism?

The scholarship is divided on the origins, significations, structures, and implications of the racist traditions of SAAs, which has led to an ambiguity over the question of race and racism, and an ensuing need for a more robust theoretical framework to capture the experiences of SAAs in the United States of America. According to Prashad (2000), "There is a real uncertainty over the question of race and racism, much of which has to do with the lack of attention paid to race in South Asian scholarship, obsessed as it is with caste" (p. 98) and color consciousness. Prasad (2000) seems to assume that race is a Western concept and according to Rubenstein (2001), "The author [Prashad] presents racism as an evil of exclusively Western origin. He does mention the suggestion of a relationship between that and the caste system, but only to dismiss the possibility of such an explanation" (p. 42). Prashad seems to dismiss caste and color prejudice of SAAs as not being relevant to analyzing the racialized experiences of SAAs by arguing:

> The idea of desire and skin color, I hazard, is not the same as "race" because concepts of
> beauty do not necessarily ascribe qualities of behavior (although this is sometimes the
> case). To be theoretical for a moment, skin color as beauty is not about the essence of

determinate Being, but it is a quality of determinate Being (despite the prevalent European idea that utilizes quality as a measure of essence)…. Fairness is a quality most often demanded of women. I believe this has to do with the woman herself (beauty), but it also has to do with the generations that follow. Women in general are considered responsible for their progeny - if a boy is born, the woman is congratulated, and vice a versa. The man is not considered responsible for the sex or the beauty of the child, since that burden is borne solely by women who are seen, in many settings, as the conduit of children. The woman-fairness-children link does imply some notion of biology, but I think it is not the same as the idea that one's entire place in the world is governed by one's "race."… To reduce an unhealthy obsession with skin color to the idea of "race" does not enable us to grasp the historical dynamics of skin color on the subcontinent. (Prashad, 2000, p. 98)

The color consciousness of South Asians in the subcontinent and in the U.S. is dismissed by Prashad as solely a marker of beauty and the quality of a human being, not the essence nor marker that ascribes qualities of behavior to a human being as race does. Much like Schueller's (2003) critique of South Asian postcolonialists, Prashad like Spivak dismisses color consciousness because their category of analysis is capitalism, not race. Color consciousness for them does not seem to be related to race.

Reinvented 'traditional' identity: South Asian culture

For SAAs, another response to their subordination is claiming a traditional, authentic cultural identity which reifies Indian culture and religion as ancient, spiritual, fixed, and unchanging, thus positioning themselves as culturally and spiritually superior in a material and modern American society (V. Lal, 2008; Narayan, 1997; Prashad, 2000). Indian culture based on

this image of an ancient, spiritual India is a romantic and idealized view of India invented by the

Orientalists during colonial times in the Indian subcontinent, appropriated by the Indian and

religious nationalists for the fight for independence during colonial times, and now appropriated

not only by the Hindu fundamentalists in the subcontinent, but by some mainstream SAAs in the

U.S. as well (V. Lal, 2008; Narayan, 1997; Prashad, 2000). SAAs claim this supposedly authentic

cultural identity, and position themselves as 'traditional' in 'modern' U.S. society in order to

create a unified and monolithic SAA group and to represent their interests in the U.S. The

construction and maintenance of this cultural identity as traditional builds on the

modernity/tradition binary, a legacy of Orientalism, colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism

from the subcontinent, especially in the special role of women in these constructions (V. Lal,

2008; Narayan, 1997; Prashad, 2000). What is paradoxical here though is that even though these

SAAs locate themselves as traditional, they are in fact modern. Their so called ancient traditions

are invented or reinvented based on the cultural and historical context of the U.S. and the Indian

subcontinent, which includes immigration and permanent settlement in the U.S. and colonialism,

and postcoloniality in the subcontinent.

A static, fixed, and essentialized Indian culture, a stand-in for ancient Indian or Aryan

civilization, has become the tool for the creation of a monolithic SAA group by the middle- to

upper-class model minority SAAs, thus imposing particular roles on the marginalized groups

within SAAs, trapping and constraining them in these roles. As Prashad (2000) insightfully

pointed out,

> As people of the middle class, on the subcontinent the fantasy of the feudal *rais* (nobles)
>
> does not fit, but in the United States it fits quite well. Here we act as ex officio
>
> representatives of a civilization rather than as members of a class community. (p. 117)

SAAs are using identity politics to participate in American civil society today and to create an

authentic or model minority community, thus regulating, constraining and at times hiding the

supposedly 'inauthentic or non-model minority' relationships within the community. For example, same-sex relationships and violence against women are seen by certain segments of SAAs as 'inauthentic' and not promoting the family values of the model minority community. Thus, these relationships are hidden and remain invisible in this community. To illustrate, Trikone, the organization for South Asian gays and lesbians, marched in the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade, but the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association was not allowed to march in the India Day Parade in New York City in 1994 (V. Lal, 2008). Lal (2008) implicated the SAAs of invoking 'a static and unchanging Indian culture' that views "Indian homosexuals as an embarrassment to the Indian community, indeed as not quite 'Indian'" (p. 78) by excluding gays and lesbians from the model minority SAAs. According to Narayan (1997), lesbians are particularly regulated by these 'so called' cultural norms, since they are at the intersection of gender, race, culture, and sexuality, and thus must choose between conforming to the norm or losing the support of their family and community who afford them protection against racism. South Asian lesbians seem to face 'triple jeopardy' in terms of prejudice and discrimination.

Similar to same-sex relationships, violence against women in the South Asian community remains hidden as well, as it does not promote the image of the authentic or model minority SAA community. According to Abraham (2006), "issues such as marital violence lay unaddressed by the mainstream segments of the community because they did not fit into the concept of the "model minority" or the happy harmonious South Asian home" (p. 202). Furthermore, they participate in their own subordination by accommodating to the model minority label.

Often as a reaction to the dominant American society's racism and cultural imperialism, they [SAAs] avoided critically looking at themselves or their community. They became so invested in portraying the model minority image that they oppressed some segments of the community, and denied the prevalence of any social problem, including violence against women, within their community. (Abraham, 2000, p. 200)

Bhattacharjee (1992) added to this and argued that domestic violence in the SAA community must be located in the context of the construction of a national identity. "The compelling and approving image of model minority can be an inducement for building [of] an image of a model India that is commensurate with this minority standing (Bhattacharjee, 1992, p. 32). The SAA desire for this model minority image which is complicit with its subordination along with its desire to fight this subordination to dominant society result in the community constructing a national identity reifying Indian history, culture, heritage, and tradition in which women become emblematic of Indian tradition and culture (Mani, 1989). Thus domestic violence among SAAs is hidden in the public sphere.

Abraham (2008) further elaborated on the role of women as cultural carriers/transmitters in the construction of this idealized, imaginary, monolithic South Asian community:

> The dominant image in the cultural rhetoric has been a relatively monolithic one that defined a woman primarily in terms of her reproductivity and her relationship to the men in her family and community. Rather than a self-defined image, she was subject to patriarchal perceptions of woman as defined in religious and cultural rhetoric.…Women were viewed as guardians of family honor and the concept of "shame" was deeply ingrained in the socialization process of women but for the interest of men, the family, and the community…The public image of the South Asian community in the United States was primarily male-defined, with women as the cultural transmitters. (p. 201)

Resulting from this patriarchal reification of culture and religion, women are conflated with 'national' identity and are assigned a particular role among SAAs as repositories, transmitters and carriers of culture (Abraham, 2006; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Narayan, 1997; Prashad, 2000).

Narayan (1997) "address[ed] the problematic roles assigned to women in immigrant Indian communities as these communities struggle with the task of balancing forms of assimilation with attempts to preserve cultural identity, and argues that these roles have their

roots in the place assigned to women in the Indian nationalist movement" (p. 162). This construction of the particular role of women as transmitters of culture dates back to the anti-colonial struggle and the nationalist response in the subcontinent with home and women as primary sites for preserving traditional India and Indian cultural identity against the modern colonial state, or in other words, colonial modernity.

> The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality. No matter what the changes in the external condition of life for women, they must not lose the essentially spiritual (i.e., feminine) virtues; they must not, in other words, become *essentially* westernized. (Chatterjee, 1999, p. 238; italics in original)

The nationalists constructed the material domain as male and the spiritual domain as feminine. India was seen as superior spiritually to the West, thus women became the physical manifestation of that domain. Thus, cultural authenticity was defined through women and women became the symbol of nation and culture. Once again, women became implicated in nationhood, cultural identity and cultural reproduction.

According to Prashad (2000), similarly in the U.S., home became a refuge against racist civil society for SAAs and culture was deployed in the home. Women as keepers of the hearth and transmitters of culture became responsible for the enactment of culture in the home in addition to them participating in the public sphere or in capitalist society by working outside the home. The Indian nationalist discourses have been retooled for today with women's participation in capitalism.

Reinvented Religious Identity: Yankee Hindutva

Another form of national or cultural identity invented by the Indian nationalists in the subcontinent that is gaining popularity among SAAs in their efforts to challenge their subordination in the U.S. is religion, in particular Hinduism (Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad 2000). "Religion is seen as the cultural essence of the subcontinent" (Prashad, 2000, p. 113) and for the sectarian Hindus or the Yankee Hindutva (Prashad, 2000) otherwise known as the Hindu Right or Hindu Nationalists in the U.S., this religion is Hinduism. For them like the Orientalists, Indian nationalists, and the Hindutva in India, Hinduism is the ancient Aryan religion of spiritual India, because of its association with Sanskrit, the language of the mythic Aryans. This helps the Yankee Hindutva to construct a Hindu cultural identity that is synonymous with SAA identity and assert the racial (Aryan) and religious superiority of Hindus over white dominant society and other minority groups in U.S, which are positioned as material and inherently less spiritual than them.

According to Prashad (2000), "In recent years, the most significant element of "national culture" among Indian Americans has been the turn to religion, especially a syndicated form of Hinduism" (p. 134) promoted by the Yankee Hindutva. "Hinduism has become an identitarian outlet for Indians experiencing the cultural, social, and geographical dislocations associated with immigration, particularly in the last two decades" (Bose, 2008, p. 12). According to Prashad (2000) and Bose (2008), the Yankee Hindutva, formed and supported by Hindu extremist groups in India, has offered Hinduism as a panacea to the many Hindu immigrants adrift in a strange land. This 'syndicated' form Hinduism is an invented tradition (Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008) "increasingly patterned on observances associated with Christianity, the dominant religious tradition in the United States" (Bose, 2008, p. 25) and positions Hinduism as monotheistic (V. Lal, 2008) rather than the polycentric, polytheistic, and doctrinally de-centered religion of the subcontinent (Bose, 2008, p. 25).

Yankee Hindutva conflates Indian culture, identity and religion with Hinduism to create a new cultural identity for the SAA community. According to Prashad (2000),

> "Culture," here, is already being used to index the customs of spirituality and domesticity and not the actual life experiences of the people… "Culture" is seen as particular high cultural traditions as constructed by religious beliefs… The chain of reasoning is simple: "culture" is religion in the interpretation of the elite priests who sanction it. (Prashad, 2000, p. 142)

In other words, for Yankee Hindutva, the high caste Hindus are defining Indian culture; thereby Indian culture is religious culture, that is Hindu culture.

Moreover, these sectarian Hindus are claiming to represent the whole SAA community even though they are invoking and favoring a particular religious and caste identity which excludes non-Hindus, and other marginalized groups within the SAA community, such as women and people of the lower castes. Bose (2008) points this out when he states the Yankee Hindutva

> Represent[s] a sectarian perspective aligned with extremist Hindu groups in India such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) [or The National Volunteers Organization] and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) [or the World Hindu Council], which have been responsible for numerous violations of civil liberties and human rights against religious minorities, women, Dalits, and Adivasis. Both the RSS and VHP belong to the militant Hindu conglomerate known as the Sangh Parivar, which champions the transformation of India's secular democracy into a Hindu nation. At the ideological level, militant Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva, has evolved into a distinct form of fascism that creates an opposition between insiders and outsiders, seeking to assert Hindu religious identity in nationalist and culturalist terms. (p. 16)

This in turn has "communalized the Desi polity in the United States" (Prashad, 2000, p. 136). The Yankee Hindutva has created a hierarchy in which Hinduism is dominant and superior to all other

religions, thus perpetuating gender and caste hierarchies reifying gender and caste relations

Once again, Indian culture and religion, portrayed as tools for the emancipation and equality of

SAAs in the U.S., become tools for exclusion and oppression further perpetuating and

reproducing hierarchies of inequality.

The social cultural perspective critiques how SAAs in the U.S. are responding to

increasing discrimination against them in American society. They are calling upon their cultural

nationalism, and positioning themselves as traditional, culturally and spiritually superior in a

material and modern U.S. by reifying their race, ancient culture, and religion. Many of the

scholars focus on how women are implicated in the enactment of this cultural nationalism and

show how women become emblematic of cultural identity and authenticity of a monolithic SAA

community in the U.S. Moreover, the social cultural perspective demystifies the traditional and

authentic cultural identity of SAAs and shows how it is modern, based on invented traditions that

are shaped by historical and cultural contexts, which include colonialism, anti-colonial

nationalism, the Orientalist imagination, immigration and permanent settlement in the U.S.

Furthermore, sectarian SAAs are conflating an invented Hinduism with Indian culture

based on an imaginary Indian civilization and "privilege[s] ancient India as the basis of their

construction of the past, imaginatively creating it as a golden age of ideal social relations

characterized by harmonious gender dynamics, benign caste interactions, and an absence of

religious conflict" (Bose, 2008, p. 18). These sectarian Hindus supported by the Yankee Hindutva

are trying to create a Hindu cultural identity which is supposed to represent all SAAs, when in

fact this particular Hindu cultural identity by its very nature is exclusive and communalist.

Therefore, culture which has been invoked by SAAs as a tool for emancipation against U.S.

racism has become a tool of repression and another way for them to reproduce the racial,

religious, gender, class, caste and color prejudices from the Subcontinent and the U.S. within

their own group and between different racial/ethnic groups by implicating racial/ethnic and

religious minorities, women, gays, lesbians, and people from the lower castes and classes. Thus, the question raised by R. Radhakrishnan is particularly relevant to the SAA racialized experience:

> It becomes difficult to determine if the drive towards authenticity is nothing but a paranoid reaction to the 'naturalness' of dominant groups…If a minority group were left in peace with itself and not dominated or forced into a relationship with the dominant world or natural order, would the group still feel the term 'authentic' meaningful unnecessary? (as cited in Prashad, 2000, p. 123)

In other words, the question is raised if South Asian Americans would try to create and maintain an authentic and monolithic cultural identity were it not for their subordination by state and civil society in the U.S. It is difficult to answer this question, since historically many of the experiences of SAAs have been mediated by a racist state and civil society.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a Perspective on Learning

Overview

This chapter is an overview of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a perspective on learning. CHAT is a descriptive and analytic theory of praxis and practical activity, which is useful for analyzing learning in everyday life from real life situations (Roth & Lee, 2007). It provides (a) a systematic framework to describe the structural aspects as well as the day-to-day experiences of SAAs from the emic point of view (Roth & Lee, 2007; Thorne, 2004) and (b) a tool to empirically analyze their experiences through its conceptualization of human activity (Baptiste, Nyanungo, & Youn, 2009, p. 18). Drawing on Engeström (1987, 1999b, 1999c, 2001), I employ the following four assumptions of CHAT to analyze the SAA experience: (a) human activities are the primary units of analysis; (b) that human activities are always mediated; (c) to understand human activities we must pay attention to their historicity and culture; and (d) that particular human activities are inherently fraught with multivoicedness and inner contradictions.

CHAT and the South Asian American Experience

In CHAT, SAAs are positioned as the subjects of the analysis or in other words, the analysis is from their perspective, so their reading and interpretation of their experiences is privileged. This is done through the unit of analysis itself, human activity operationalized through

the activity system (see Figure 3-2; Engeström, 1987, 2001). Human activity is the least

meaningful context to understand individual actions in their cultural and historical context (Roth

& Lee, 2007; Sawchuk, 2003). This is particularly relevant for my study since the histories and

cultures of SAAs play an important role in shaping and constituting their experiences (Abraham,

2006; Bose, 2008; V. Lal, 2008; Mazumdar, 1989; U. Narayan, 1997b; Prashad, 2000).

Moreover, the cultural and historical context is informed by postcolonial theory and critical race

theory. Therefore, race, culture, religion, caste, colonialism, immigration to the U.S., the

subsequent discrimination and exclusion by the American state and dominant society, and the

quest for belonging and identity of the SAA experience is part of the cultural historical context of

this study. In addition, through analysis of contradictions, the SAA experience includes both the

structural and individual levels of analysis (social structural issues such as race, class, etc. as well

as the politics of difference and cultural politics), thus giving a richer picture of their experiences.

CHAT overcomes the human agent and structure dualism (Engeström, 1999a) in current

scholarship through the concept of mediation and mediating artifacts and reveals how American

society and SAAs mutually shape each other. Activity theorists think that human beings have

agency and are not merely the acted upon "which allows for critique and revision" (Roth & Lee,

2007, p. 210). Mediation refers to the idea that human thought and behavior is always mediated

by artifacts (Nardi, 1996). In other words, in CHAT, the relationship between the subject and the

object is always mediated by material and/or symbolic artifacts (mediating artifacts). Mediation

overcomes the state/civil society and SAA dualism by maintaining that subjects and objects are

co-constituted; each takes its essence, not a-priorily, but *in human activity*—i.e., through the use

of material and symbolic tools (Baptiste et al., 2009; Engeström, 1987, 1999c, 2001; Sawchuk,

2003, 2006). In turn, these mediating artifacts are constituted by and constitute history and

culture. In other words, "CHAT explicitly incorporates the mediation of activities by society" and

"theorizes persons continually shaping and being shaped by their social contexts" (Roth & Lee,

2007, p. 189).

In addition, CHAT's principles of multivoicedness and historicity help to address the gaps in the scholarship which do not position SAAs as subjects with agency, thus rendering their experience a homogenized one without the inclusion of their multiple voices, perspectives, and histories. Multivoicedness and historicity address this gap by showing the diversity, multiple perspectives, different subject positions, and power differentials within SAAs themselves and between them and American society at large. This will hopefully not only reveal the complexities and nuances of the SAA experience, thus challenging the monolithic and *othering* construction described above, but also the ways in which SAAs have pushed and shaped American society, which is a much needed contribution to the literature.

Brief history of CHAT

Contemporary CHAT originated with Soviet cultural-historical psychologists Vygotsky, A.N. Leont'ev, and Luria in the 1920s and 1930s, and can trace its lineage to classical German philosophy and dialectical materialism (Engeström, 1999a; Kuutti, 1995; Roth & Lee, 2007; Youn, 2007). CHAT reached Europe and North America in the 1970s and since then contemporary CHAT has become an interdisciplinary, international metatheory (Engeström, 1999a; Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 29) that has been developed differently by different scholars. The conceptualization of learning as a sociocultural phenomenon is the core contribution of Vygotsky, the central founding member of the cultural-historical school of Soviet psychology, who revolutionized psychology and the understanding of learning with his concept of cultural mediation (Sawchuk, 2003; Youn, 2007).

Activity

Activity, the fundamental unit of analysis in CHAT, is derived from Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* in which he argues that activity is sensuous human activity, practice (Engeström, 1987, 1999c; Roth, 2008; Youn, 2007). Marx's notion of sensuous human activity transcends the material/ideal dualism and introduces the idea of social change through human activity. These ideas of Marx greatly influenced Vygotsky who was the bridge between Marx and A.N. Leont'ev's theory of collective activity (Sawchuk, 2003; Youn, 2007). Moreover, many of the other components of CHAT, such as the dialectical relationship between subject and object, mediation, and contradictions that make it a theory to examine change and development in human behavior and society, originate from Marx.

In CHAT, activity is defined as an object-directed, culturally mediated collective effort. Individual and group actions are embedded in and thereby made meaningful in this collective effort.

Activity system [Figure 3-2] as a unit of analysis calls for complementarity of the system view and the subject's view. The analyst constructs the activity system as if looking at it from above. At the same time, the analyst must select a subject … of the local activity, through whose eyes and interpretations the activity is constructed. This dialectic between the systemic and subjective-partisan view brings the researcher into a dialogical relationship with the local activity under investigation. The study of an activity system becomes a collective, multivoiced construction of its past, present, and future. (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 10)

The subjects of the activity systems are the specific SAAs in this study, so their agency is foregrounded in the analysis. I used Engeström's (1987, 1999c, 2001), activity triangle or activity system (Figure 3-2) to graphically depict the dialectical relationship between the six key

elements: subject, object, mediating instruments, rules, community, and division of labor. The object directs the activity; it is both material and ideal (Roth & Lee, 2007). The object is the "problem space" that the subject is transforming into an outcome (Engeström, 1996, p. 67). The mediating instruments are the tools, signs, and symbols or repository of culture. The base of the triangle—community, rules, and division of labor—provides the cultural and historical context of the human activity.

An activity is always evolving and changing due to inherent structural tensions (contradictions) between and among the six elements (Figures 3-2 & 3-3). One manifestation of such contradictions is the multiple perspectives and multivoicedness of participants in the activity. The multiple perspectives exist because they stem, inexorably, from the varying roles played by different sets of actors within the activity system, and correspondingly, from the different communities upon which the actors rely for guidance (rules) and material support (instruments). These internal contradictions are the "source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) in the activity system; their identification and resolution lead to individual and social change.

Three generations of Cultural Historical Activity Theory

First generation: Mediated human action

I follow Engeström's lead in looking at the development of CHAT in three generations (Engeström, 1987, 1999c, 2001; Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999). In the first generation of CHAT, Vygotsky's concept of cultural mediation and the resulting tripartite model of mediated human action (Figure 3-1) revolutionized psychology and the understanding of learning (Youn, 2007). Vygotsky's tripartite model of mediated action depicts that the subject

```
S .------------------------------. R        Mediating artifact
   \                          /                      ^
    \                        /          Subject      |
     \                      /              <---------+-------->  Object
      \                    /
       \                  /
        \                /
         \              /
          \            /
           X
```
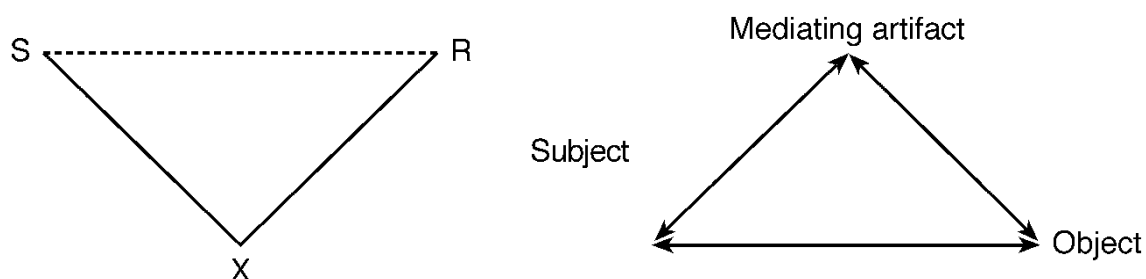
Figure 3-1:Vygotsky's model of mediated act and (B) its common reformulation (Engeström, 2001, p. 134).

 (learner) and object are connected to each other through mediation, thus showing the dialectical relationship between them. Mediation revolutionized the concept of human action—that is "human action is not a direct response to the environment—it is mediated by culturally meaningful tools and signs which make the human being able to control him- or herself from the outside" (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, n.d.-b) "not just "from the inside" on the basis of biological urges" (Engeström, 1999a). As Engeström (2001) points out "the insertion of cultural artifacts into human actions was revolutionary in that the basic unit of analysis overcame the split between the Cartesian individual and the untouchable societal structure" (p.134). In addition, mediation also overcomes the subject/object as well as the as well as the mind/body dualism. "Artifacts … embody the accumulated history of human ingenuity and creativity" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 199).

Vygotsky took object-oriented human action mediated by cultural tools and signs (Engeström, 1987, 1999c) as the basic unit of analysis. Vygotsky argued that learning is sociocultural rather than merely a cognitive phenomenon (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 38), a key contribution. The weakness in Vygotsky's conception of activity is the focus on individual action as opposed to collective activity and this is overcome by A.N. Leont'ev in the second generation of CHAT (Engeström, 2001).

Second generation: Collective activity

The second generation is greatly influenced by A. N. Leont'ev with his introduction of collective activity by expanding on Vygotsky's concept of mediation, integrating the historically evolving division of labor into the formulation of activity, and differentiating between the three hierarchical levels of activity (activity, action and operation; Engeström, 1987; Engeström, 1999c; Sawchuk, 2003). Vygotsky had not integrated social mediation, so Leont'ev expanded mediating artifacts to include material tools, signs and symbols (language and communication), thus making a break through in the conceptualization of activity from individual action to collective activity. As Roth and Lee (2007) explain, "CHAT explicitly incorporates the mediation of activities by *society,* which … is possible only because activity theorists are concerned with upholding human activity—the historical results of the division of labor—as the fundamental unit of analysis" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 189).

Leont'ev illustrated the difference between individual action and collective activity using the example of the "primeval collective hunt" (Engeström, 1987, 1999c). Beaters and catchers participate in a hunt (activity) with the object of catching an animal in order to get food or clothing (using the skin of the dead animal). During the hunt, the beaters frighten the game away from them toward the catchers, so the catchers can catch the animal. If we look at the actions of the beaters only, their actions of chasing the animal away from them do not meet their object of catching an animal to satisfy their need for food or clothing (the human need or motive behind the activity). Conversely, if their actions are analyzed as part of the collective activity, their actions help the catchers to catch the animal, so both beaters and catchers achieve the object of the activity which is to get food or clothing. Therefore, Leont'ev concludes, "Processes, the object and motive of which do not coincide with one another, we shall call 'actions.' We can say, for example, that the beater's activity is the hunt, the frightening of the game the action" (as cited in Engeström, 1999c, p. 4). I want to point out two things from this example: (a) the division of

labor with the beaters and catchers working together makes it a collective activity and (b) human actions are understandable only when interpreted against the background of an entire activity (Engeström, 2001, p. 136).

Furthermore, Leont'ev used three levels of activity to differentiate between activity and action (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999) and these three dialectically related levels of analysis enable the concrete understanding of human behavior (Roth & Lee, 2007). The three levels are activity, action, and operation; each defined by the object that directs it (Baptiste et al., 2009; Engeström, 1999a, p. 23). The top level, activity, is directed by object-related motive and is collective; the intermediary level, individual or group action, is directed by goals; and the lower level, automatic operations, are directed by prevailing conditions and tools at hand (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 4). Prevailing conditions encompass the cultural-historical context of human behavior and include "available tools, technology, and resources (instruments; Baptiste et al., 2009, p. 20). To summarize Leont'ev's conceptualization of activity: "activity is a collective system driven by an object and motive" (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, n.d.-bAlexei Leont'ev). Activity is realized by concrete goal-directed actions while actions are realized through automatic routine operations (Roth & Lee, 2007), dependent on the conditions of the action (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, n.d.-bAlexei Leont'ev).

Individual actions are embedded in collective activity, therefore "an activity is the minimal meaningful context to understand individual actions" (Leont'ev as cited in Sawchuk, 2003, p. 41). Furthermore, Leont'ev included the three components, division of labor, rules, and community, to Vygotsky's mediated human action (Figure 3-1) to make it a collective activity Engeström (1996, 1999b, 2001). Therefore, Leont'ev's collective activity is object-driven, culturally-mediated, and motive-oriented set of actions and operations taking place within a community in a particular cultural and historical context. Activity is directed by the object

(catching an animal in the primeval hunt example), so object is central to the analysis of activity (Engeström, 1996, 1999b, 2001; Foot, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003). Objects differentiate one activity from another and behind every object is a motive, human need, or desire. Without a motive, there is no activity. Embedded in every object is the motive, so from now on I will be referring to the object as object-motive.

Leont'ev contributed to the development of CHAT by formulating a theory of human activity based on the concept of activity as a systemic formation and as a unit of analysis. According to Leont'ev, "The real function of this unit [activity] is to orient the subject in the world of objects. In other words, activity is not a reaction or aggregate of reactions, but a system with its own structure, its own internal transformations, and its own development" (Youn, 2007, p. 42). What differentiates the first generation from the second generations is "the analysis of social participation with others" (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 40). Furthermore, Leont'ev

> provides the means to begin to analyze everyday learning systematically, with or without
> reference to conscious reflection, as something more than simply a shapeless flow of
> experience. It roots this flow of experience in specific forms of social organization that
> include historical as well as political-economic dimensions. (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 41)

Engeström (1987, 1999c, 2001) developed a graphic representation of this systemic collective activity with the activity triangle (Figure 3-2) in the third generation of CHAT.

Third generation: Activity system

Engeström (1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2001) has been a major contributor to the third generation of CHAT. The unit of analysis in the third generation is the activity system or the activity triangle (Figure 3-2), the structural depiction of Leont'ev's six elements of activity. Although the use of the activity triangle does have its limitations, I find it to be useful to
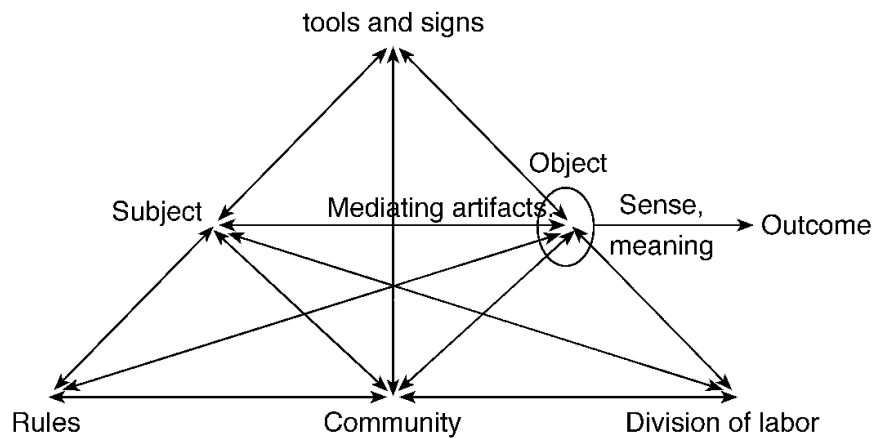
Figure 3-2: Structure of collective human activity system (Engeström, 2001, p. 134).

operationalize and analyze human activity. One of Engeström's important contributions to CHAT

is the notion of contradictions as "sources of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137)

in order to concretely analyze change in individuals and society (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). The

third generation is also trying to account for "dialogue, multiple perspectives and voices, and

networks of interacting activity systems" (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work

Research, n.d.-a, para. 10) to address some of the criticisms of the second generation such as "the

deep-seated insensitivity of the second generation activity theory toward cultural diversity" and

"questions of diversity and dialogue between different traditions or perspectives" (Engeström,

2001, p. 135).

Engeström's activity triangle of a human activity system (Figure 3-2) shows the

dialectical relationship between the six dynamic elements of the activity or activity system:

subject, object, mediating artifacts (tools and signs), rules, community, and division of labor

through the use of double-edged arrows. The top part of the triangle is the mediated relationship

between subject and object through tools, signs, and symbols (mediating artifacts) —Vygotsky's

tripartite structure of human action. The bottom part of the triangle is the cultural-historical

context. This depicts that individual and group actions are embedded in the collective activity

system (Engeström, 2001, p. 134).

The subject is the human agent or agents whose perspective drives the analysis of the activity system. In other words, the activity is depicted from the emic perspective and this subject is either a collective subject or an individual whose agency is foregrounded in the analysis (for example the beaters from Leont'ev's primeval hunt or Gallifrey, Satya, etc. in this study). The object-motive directs the activity and it is the "raw material" or "problem space" (Engeström, 1996, p. 67) that the subject is transforming into an outcome. Engeström adds to it by arguing, "the object—as it grows in motivating force-—shapes and directs the activity, and … determines the horizon of possible actions" (as cited in Foot, 2001, p. 3). The object in Figure 3-2 is depicted with an oval because the object-motive of the activity is evolving and "always, explicitly or implicitly, characterized by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense making, and potential for change" (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). The object-motive is both material (physical properties) and ideal (symbolic properties; Baptiste et al., 2009, p. 19; Roth & Lee, 2007). To illustrate, identifying as American is the object-motive directing Gnana's "Identifying as an American" activity system (Figure 5-4). The tools are "called the repository of culture or "crystallized operations" (Leont'ev, 1978) that reflect and afford certain preferred patterns of culture, tools" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 203). For example, in the primeval hunt, the catchers might have used nets and spears (tools) to catch the animal, but today, a rifle might be used in the hunt. This shows that tools are historically and culturally situated and called repositories of culture. Skin color and school are the tools that mediate the interactions in Gnana's "Identifying as an American" activity system. Rules are the conventions and norms that guide the activity and mediate the relationship between the subject and the community. American citizenship requirements, U.S. cultural norms, and K-12 rules and regulations are the rules that govern Gnana's "Identifying as an American" activity system. The community is made up of individuals or groups who share the same general object-motive as the subject (for example, beaters and catchers share the same object-motive of catching an animal, thus forming a community). K-12 schools and Gnana's hometown Summer

make up the community in Gnana's "Identifying as an American" activity system. The division of labor refers to the "horizontal actions and interactions among the members of the community" (Thorne, 2004, para. 16) and "to the vertical division of power and status" (Engeström, 1996, p. 67). For example, in the primeval hunt, the division of responsibilities—actions of the beaters chasing the animal to the catchers and the catchers catching the animal—illustrates the horizontal interactions. If there are power differentials within the two groups, that would refer to the vertical division of labor. White Americans, K-12 teachers and students make up the division of labor in Gnana's "Identifying as an American" activity system. The K-12 teachers are the vertical division of labor in this activity system, since they have power over Gnana's sons. The outcome is the intended or unintended result of the activity, for example catching and killing the animal in the primeval hunt or Gnana identifying as American in her activity system. Furthermore, "the areas at the base of Engeström's diagram—the community, rules, and division of labor—provide a conceptual framework that brings together local human activity and larger socio-cultural-historical structures" (Thorne, 2004, para. 16).

Engeström conceptualized activity system as an "object-oriented and cultural formation that has its own structure" (Engeström, 1999a, p. 21), so "the systemic structure of activity can be thoroughly analyzed and modeled" (Engeström, 1999a, p. 25). This in turn helps concretize human actions into dynamic elements that can be analyzed. Even though the activity triangle might make it seem that an activity or activity system is static and fixed, it is not. An activity is always evolving and changing due to the inherent structural tensions between the dialectical elements within the activity system and between activity systems, known as contradictions in CHAT (Engeström, 1999c, 2001).

Contradictions

According to Engeström (1999c, 2001), internal contradictions of activity systems are the "source

of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) and the identification and resolution of

these contradictions lead to individual and social change as well as learning. Contradictions in

CHAT are defined as "historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity

systems" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). They "are not the same as problems or conflicts"

(Engeström, 2001, p. 137). The primary contradiction of activities in capitalist societies is that

between the use value and exchange value of commodities which pervades all elements of our

activity systems (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). There are four levels of contradictions (Engeström,

1999c): primary contradictions which are contradictions within elements in an activity system;

secondary contradictions which are between elements in an activity system; tertiary

contradictions which are between the object and motive of the dominant activity system and the

object and motive of a culturally more evolved activity system; and quaternary contradictions

which emerge between activity systems in an activity network. The resolutions of these different

levels of contradictions result in both horizontal as well as vertical development, a break through

in thinking about learning, since development in learning has traditionally been thought of as

higher psychological development (vertical development). In addition, the resolution of

contradictions leading to new patterns of activity or the formation of new activity systems is

called expansive learning (Engeström, 2001, p. 139).

Contradictions are particularly important in CHAT when society is conceptualized as a

web of mutually dependent, interacting activity systems or activity networks (interacting activity

systems).

All activity systems are part of a network of activity systems that in its totality constitutes

human society. Diverse activity systems are the result of a continuous historical process

of progressive job diversification and collective division of labor at the societal level

(Marx, 1867/1976)…. The first activity system is understood as a concrete universal,

which particularizes itself into many mutually constitutive activity systems. (Roth & Lee,

2007, p. 200)

Therefore, to aid empirical analysis, Engeström expanded the unit of analysis from one activity

system (Figure 3-2) to a minimal model of two interacting activity systems (Figure 3-3). In

interacting activity systems, the object of each activity system evolves into a shared, collective

object or as Engeström (2001) puts it, "the object moves from an initial state of unreflected,

situationally given 'raw material' (object 1…) to a collectively meaningful object constructed by

the activity system (object 2…), and to a potentially shared or jointly constructed object (object

3…; p. 136). Activity is not a short-term event, but "an evolving, complex structure of mediated

and collective human agency" (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 198).

Engeström's five principles of CHAT

Engeström (2001) summarizes the current development of CHAT in five principles that

includes the role of contradictions in accounting for change and development for society. The

other four principles are (Engeström, 2001, pp. 136-137) : (a) a collective, artifact-mediated and

object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as

the prime unit of analysis (Figure 3-3); (b) multivoicedness of activity systems; (c) historicity;

and (d) possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems (Engeström, 2001, pp. 136-

137). In this study, to describe the experiences of SAAs in the Unites States, I focus mainly on

multivoicedness and historicity, because these principles help capture the multiple perspectives of

the subjects and analyze their racialized experiences in the context of history.
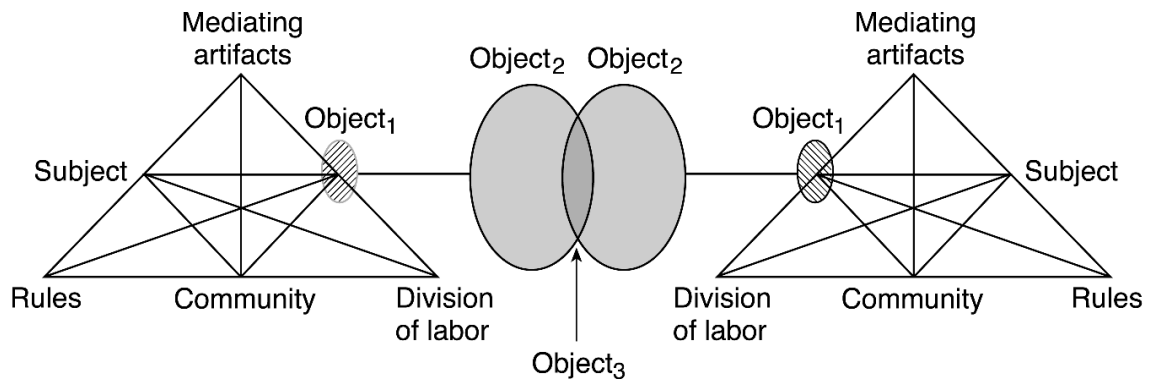
Figure 3-3: Two interacting activity systems as minimal model in third generation of CHAT (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

One manifestation of contradictions is the multiple perspectives and multivoicedness of the four participants in the activity. The multiple perspectives exist because they stem, inexorably, from the varying roles played by different sets of actors within the activity system, and correspondingly, from the different communities of practices upon which the actors rely for guidance (rules) and material support (instruments; Engeström, 1987, 2001). Multivoicedness is generated from the "multiple points of view, traditions and interests" in the activity system (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). Engeström (2001) elaborates further:

> The division of labor in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artifacts, rules and conventions…. It is a source of trouble and a source of innovation, demanding actions of translation and negotiation. (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

To illustrate, Gnana, one of the participants in my study is a mother, a daughter, an immigrant, a mahajar (refugee or migrant), a professional, a board member, etc. and she has a different perspective and voice in each of these roles in her activities. This is her multivoicedness.

Historicity or historical dialectic refers to the historical development of an activity system. Engeström (2001) describes this historicity this way:

> Activity systems take shape and get transformed over lengthy periods of time. Their
>
> problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history. History itself
>
> needs to be studied as local history of the activity and its objects, and as history of the
>
> theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity. (pp. 136-137)

Satya, one of the participants in the study, becomes a South Asian American over her 22-year old life span. She identifies as an American and then identifies as a SAA through her participation in a South Asian interest sorority in the university. Her experience as a SAA cannot be analyzed without taking into account her personal history as well as the history of her South Asian interest sorority at her university. For example, she founded the chapter of the sorority at the university, etc.

To summarize the main points of CHAT so far: CHAT is founded on the concept of mediation that led to the notion of collective activity. Collective activity is structurally depicted through an object-directed, motive-oriented activity systems made up of six dialectical components, and this activity system becomes the unit of analysis. The inherent structural contradictions within and between activity systems are analyzed as the forces leading to individual and social change.

Learning in Cultural Activity Historical Theory

One such change is learning. Sawchuk (2003) argues, CHAT is a "structured approach to understanding learning as participation in social practice defined by dynamic transformations, change, and interrelation with other social systems" (p. 39). Learning happens in everyday life through a subject's participation in collective activities (Sawchuk's [2003] notion of social

participation), however, learning is not the outcome of every activity (Baptiste et al., 2009; Youn, 2007). Thus Baptiste, et al. (2009) assert that

> Not all human activities result in learning. This assertion sets up an important distinction … between learning and activity. We treat activities (and actions) as means and learning is one possible end….This is why we argue that (for empirical purposes) learning is better treated as processual outcomes of human activity than as activity, itself. (pp. 39-40)

Learning, in other words, is in the doing. A subject learns something—an intended outcome or unintended outcome of an activity—in the pursuit of an object. This notion of learning differs from Engeström's (1999c) notion of learning operationalized through separate 'learning activities.'

> According to (Baptiste et al., 2009),
>
> A major research implication … that learning is best treated as outcomes of activity is this: to empirically examine learning we do not search for any special learning process or processes. Instead, we simply analyze everyday human activities and ask: what new and/or revised repertoire of operations has this or that activity generated. Those new and/or revised operations are what we call learning. (Baptiste et al., 2009, p. 40)

Learning is no longer a conditioned response to stimuli, a complex cognitive process that is unexplainable, or a process that cannot account for the acquisition of new knowledge or skills, but a change in operations, actions and/or activities leading to new action possibilities for the subject. The introduction of cultural artifacts (i.e., mediating tools and signs) enables us to open up the door to understanding learning using a cultural-historical approach (Youn, 2007, p. 39).

CHAT provides a framework that can help analyze the 'what,' 'how,' and 'why' of learning by concretely identifying the motive or human need driving the human activity (the why) as well as the six dialectical components of the activity through the activity triangle (Figure 3). Learning in CHAT is contextualized and concrete. Learning in CHAT is shaped by the culture

and history embedded in the activity.

As Lord & Sawchuk (2006) argue,

CHAT is a specific tradition of analyzing learning and human development that accounts

for informal as well as formalized learning; consciously directed as well as tacit learning;

individual as well as collective practice; material, organizational and cultural barriers and

supports. This offers a systematic social analysis of learning throughout its full range of

variation, but never loses sight of the deeply human face of human development. (as cited

in Lord & Schied, 2007, p. 380)

This social analysis of learning starts with collective activity and the mediated, dialectical

relationship between the learner and the world. It is important to emphasize that activity

presupposes the subject and object not the subject or object presupposing the activity. In other

words, the subject and object are constituted only through activity. As Lave, Murtaugh, and de la

Rocha clarify: "What the relevant object is in actions and activities observed depends on who the

acting subject is, and the nature of the relevant subject depends on the nature of the object" (as

cited in Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 198). Hence, learning is equivalent to the mutual change of object

and subject in the process of activity; human beings plan and change the material world and

societal life just as these settings mutually transform agents and the nature of their interactions

with each other. Learning occurs during the expansion of the subject's action possibilities in the

pursuit of meaningful objects in activity (Engeström, 1991b).

Most importantly, CHAT has revolutionized the study of learning by overcoming some

of the basic problems in current learning theories, such as the subject and object dualism (Baptiste

et al., 2009; Youn, 2007), the learner/knowledge dualism (Roth & Lee, 2007), and

individual/society dualism (Youn, 2007); the focus on individual learning (Baptiste et al., 2009;

Sawchuk, 2003); and the privileging of the cognitive dimension of learning (Sawchuk, 2003, p.

25). In addition, CHAT challenges the notion of learning as an ahistorical, universal process (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 25).

Conclusion

CHAT, based on mediation and collective activity, provides a rich framework to understand learning and search for new understandings of the SAA experience. CHAT's strengths are its emphasis on the "historical determinations of practical labor and the historical conditions of culture, cognition, and learning" (p. 191); "the ability to address the wider context and continuities beyond the transient actions" (Hyysalo as cited in Nardi, 2005, p. 39); and its "conception of human activity as indivisible from functional activity systems" (Thorne, 2004, para. 16).

Learning takes its motives from the particular activities in which it occurs. These motives vary from activity to activity. Learning is not as a special process or activity, but is one possible (but not inevitable) *outcome* of human activity. Learning in this study is defined as processual outcomes of human activities (Baptiste, et al., 2009, p. 301) that take the form of resolution of contradictions. To empirically examine learning, what is required is for investigators to systematically analyze everyday human activities (CHAT provides ways to do so) and ask: what new repertoire of operations has this or that activity generated? These new human operations are understood as learning.

Chapter 4

Research Design

Overview

This chapter is an overview of my research approach feminist ethnography, the research site, participant profiles, my data collection and data analysis strategies, indicators of research quality, and limitations of the study.

The primary research question is:

What is the relevance of the concept of race in the South Asian American (SAA) experience?

The secondary research questions are:

a) What conceptions of race do SAA participants' life histories reveal?

b) How have SAA participants' conceptions of race shaped their experiences?

c) How did the SAA participants learn these conceptions of race?

Feminist ethnography is the approach used to capture the thick descriptions of the SAA experience. Feminist ethnography is the contextualized, cultural interpretation of the routine, everyday experiences of a cultural group informed by a feminist stance (Buch & Staller, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Skeggs, 2001; Wolcott, 1989) which makes the researched 'subjects' with agency (J. Lal, 1996) and acknowledges the politics of representation to mitigate the power differentials between the researcher and researched (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Stacey, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994) and the inherent biases in the doing and writing of ethnography.

Postcolonial feminist politics grounds every aspect of the study, including the politics of representation, positionality, and feminist ethics. The research was conducted for over a year at

Summer located in a northeastern state in the United States. "K," an Indian restaurant, a meeting

place for SAAs was the primary research site. Field notes from 74.41 hours of participant

observations at "K" and 13 life history interviews with four participants totaling 14.55 hours, and

604 pages of transcription were the sources of data. The key informants were the owners of the

restaurant. Purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify the four participants

in the study. The selection criteria was: U.S.-born or naturalized U.S. citizens or permanent

resident immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and diaspora living in the U.S. (a) whose roots

can be traced back to present-day India and (b) who self-identify as SAA or one of the other

designations used such as Asian Indian, South Asian, Indian American, desi, or Bharatiya.

"Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples, even single cases

(N=1)…selected *purposefully* to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon *in*

depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 46; italics in original). According to Flyvberg (2006), the advantage of

qualititve studies like these is the depth and nuance of the experience explored in small samples

unlike the breadth captured in larger sample quantitive studies. In addition, as Patton (2002)

argues, the credibility and meaningfulness of qualitiative research depends more on case selection

and the analytical capabilities of the researcher than on sample size (Patton, 2002, p. 245). I

recognize that four is a small sample, however, I was not looking for representativeness or to

make this group of SAAs the *generalized other* representing their entire culture (Narayan as cited

in J. Lal, 1996; italics in orginal). I was looking for information-rich cases that would provide a

deeper and more nuanced description of the racialized experience of SAAs.

Multiple case study (Stake, 1995, 1998, 2005) was used as a process and product of

analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 447). Hence, every participant in this study was treated as a specific,

bounded (Stake, 1995, 1998, 2005), information-rich case that provided "insights and in-depth

understanding" (Patton, 2002, p. 230) of the racialized experience of SAAs. In addition, to the

depth of individual experience, the four cases also provided valuable insights into the differences

and similarities in the SAA experience. Thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2008) complemented by CHAT, postcolonial feminist theory, and critical race theory were the analytical lens used in this study. First, the racialized narratives of each participant were identified using thematic narrative analysis, then those narratives were analyzed using CHAT, postcolonial feminist theory, and critical race theory to describe the relevance of race in the SAA experience and how the participants learned their conceptions of race.

Research Approach: Feminist Ethnography

Ethnography is the "art and science of describing a group or culture" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1). It is the cultural interpretation of social processes (I. Baptiste, personal communication, April 29, 2015). According to Fetterman (1998), some claim that ethnography's primary contribution to research is cultural interpretation of what the researcher saw and heard from "the social group's view of reality" (p. 18). It is a holistic, cultural portrait from the emic perspective. What differentiates ethnography from other qualitative research approaches, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry is the study of culture. Culture is not an amorphous term, not something "lying about" (Wolcott, 1989, p. 44) rather something the researcher attributes to a group as she looks for "predictable patterns of human thought and behavior" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1). Culture is the webs of significance or meaning (Geertz, 1973) of people's lives. Skeggs (2001) added that "ethnography is probably the only methodology that is able to take into account the multifaceted ways in which subjects are produced through the historical categories and context in which they are placed and which they precariously inhabit" (p. 433). This is particularly relevant to my study since the experiences of SAAS are very much shaped by their political, economic, cultural contexts in the U.S. and their homelands (Chandrasekhar, 1982b; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989).

Feminist ethnography is ethnography informed by feminist epistemology and ethics, thus I use 'feminist ethnography' and 'ethnography informed by feminist methodology' interchangeably. I see feminist ethnography as a contextualized, cultural interpretation of the routine, everyday experiences of a cultural group informed by a feminist stance (Buch & Staller, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Skeggs, 2001; Wolcott, 1989).

The fundamental question that orients and drives feminist ethnography is "in whose interests?"(Skeggs, 2001, p. 437). For feminist methodologists who introduced the feminist lens to redress past inequalities, such as the exploitation of women and the researched as objects of knowledge, and to democratize the research process (Perumal & Pillay, 2002, p. 94), the answer to the above question is—the interests of the researched, the *other* and the researcher.

Historically, many ethnographic endeavors have been a study and representation of the "other" and the "discourse of the self" (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Patai, 1991; Vidich & Lyman, 2003; Wolcott, 1989). For example, in the past it was the colonial anthropologists studying the colonized (the *other*), while today, it is Western feminists studying third world women, or sociologists studying gangs, the ghettos or inner city schools – the *other*. This has constituted the *self/other* binary in ethnography with self as researcher, knower or subject and the *other* as the researched, the acted upon, the known or object. This study of the *other* encompasses the "elusive quality of 'strangeness'" (Wolcott, 1989, p. 243), the cultural interpretation of the *other*'s behavior in which "culture is an abstraction we reserve for describing the (strange) behavior of other" (Wolcott, 1989, p. 89). Therefore, one of the critiques of ethnography is that it is "predicated on difference" (Wolcott, 1989, p. 132), and "if one thinks of it as a process of "mapping" cultural territory, then what we mark on our ethnographic "maps" are differences" (Wolcott, 1989, p. 133).

Feminist ethnographers have recognized, problematized, and tried to transcend some of these nagging ethical and methodological tensions in ethnography, such as: (a) the self/*other*

dualism (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Visweswaran, 1997) by researchers like me studying their own cultures (my culture could be defined by race, identification, affiliation, etc.) and having "respect for the integrity of difference" (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 21); (b) the politics of representation (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Stacey, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994) by doing member checks and having critical peer briefings that include the participants; and (c) the power differentials between the researcher and researched and 'within and between cultures' in the doing and writing of ethnography (Visweswaran, 1994) by being transparent about the research process, doing member checks and having critical peer briefings that include the participants. Feminist ethnography not only questions and "continually challenges even the notion of a canon" of doing and writing ethnography (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 39), it also challenges the researcher 'to write about the oppressed without becoming one of the oppressors" (Patai, 1991, pp. 138-139). Researchers like me studying their own cultures (e.g. I am studying my culture in this study, because I identify as SAA) can be challenging, but feminist ethnography gives us the tools like feminist ethics and responsibilities and researcher positionality to do rigorous and quality research.

Even though feminist ethnography started as a study of women, "there has been a shift from ethnographies on women to ethnographies informed by feminist theory" (Skeggs, 2001, p. 429). Consequently, feminist ethnography is no longer just a study of women, but a study of social change in the lives of all people from a feminist perspective. Feminist ethnography along with CHAT helped ensure that SAAs as the research participants were the 'subjects' with agency instead of the objects of exploitation in this study. Feminist ethnography helped me do this by not making SAAs the *generalized other* representing their entire culture (Narayan as cited in J. Lal, 1996; italics in original). I did this by ensuring that I did not generalize the findings of the study to be representative of all SAAs in the U.S. and that it was the experience of a particular group of SAAs who participated in the study. In addition, it helped me tell the story from the perspective

of the SAA participants in the study, yet at the same time, placing me "within the same historical

moment, or critical plane" (Tedlock, 2000, p. 466) as them. The feminist strategies that are

particularly relevant to this study include: (a) deconstructing and overcoming the self/*other*

binary, (b) problematizing the politics of representation, (c) foregrounding the researcher's

positionality, and (d) being informed by feminist ethics, especially critical reflexivity. The

politics of representation (the cultural interpretation/translation in ethnographic research as well

as who speaks, presents, re-presents the *other)* and the ensuing power differentials inherent in the

research process are postcolonial critiques of feminist ethnography (J. Lal, 1996; Visweswaran,

1994, 1997) which are salient for my research, since SAAs have been historically positioned as

the *other* in American society (Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989).

Deconstructing and overcoming the self/*other* binary

Similar to CHAT, feminist methodology tries to deconstruct and overcome the *self/other*

binary in ethnography by problematizing the subject position of the *other* (Abu-Lughod, 1990;

Visweswaran, 1997). According to Abu-Lughod (1990), in the *self/other* binary, the construction

of the researched as the *other* and the researcher as the self, parallel the historical location of

women as the *other* in opposition to men as self (pp. 24-26). The self was an identity "whose

selfhood was not problematic" (p. 24) as opposed to the problematic *other* in this construction.

This fixed yet false binary shaped all phases of ethnography, which resulted in the inegalitarian

representation of the researched, unequal power relations between the researcher and the

researched, and the bolstering of the authority of the researcher. Feminists have historically

recognized the hierarchical power differentials in this false binary of self and *other* and have tried

to dismantle the systems of oppression constituted by this binary.

Abu-Lughod (1990) proposed that with the deconstruction of the universal category of

woman, the identity of the self or feminist researcher was problematized. The self was no longer

constituted by a universal, whole self, but through the intersections of partial and multiple

identities same as the identity of the *other* (the researched), because of the dynamics of

positionality (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 25). This is a structural shift in ethnography, "an unsettling

of the boundaries that have been central to its [ethnography] identity as a discipline of the self

studying the other" (p. 26). Now, the problem is no longer how to communicate across the

self/other divide, but the theorizing of the experience of going back and forth between these

worlds (Abu-Lughod, 1990), very much applicable to me as both subject and object of this

research. Visweswaran (1994) adds to this unsettling of boundaries by calling for "respect for the

integrity of difference" to replace "the ethnographic goal of understanding and representation"

(Visweswaran, 1994, p. 21). I have striven to demonstrate "respect for the integrity of difference"

throughout all phases of this study and to foreground the intersectionality of race, culture, and

religion, all the while, struggling to respect the different conceptions and enactments of race by

the SAAs in this study. One of the ways that I did this was by listening respectfully to the

participants during their interviews and not giving my opinion on their experiences. I also wrote

down my challenges and reactions to participant narratives in my field notes and memos, so I

could reflect on them and write respectfully about their differences instead of merely reacting to

them.

Politics of representation

Even if feminist ethnographic strategies help address the us/them, subject/object,

self/other binaries, and the recognition of the researcher's dominant location, the power

differentials between the researcher and the researched in terms of the final product of the

ethnography still has to be addressed (Visweswaran, 1994). "Feminist ethnographers have

particularly struggled over methods of representing the people they study in ways that seek to balance the visions of the author with the visions of those they study" (Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 216), but this remains another contradiction in this tradition. As Patai argues:

> Feminists often make the mistake of imagining that simple participation in the discourse of feminism protects them from the possibility of exploiting other women even when their research practices are predicated on privilege. Regardless of your feminist positions, it is essential that you consider how dynamics of power, including hierarchies of class, race, education, and access, will affect the lives of those you study. (Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 218)

I am fully aware that this, the final ethnographic product, is in my voice even if I tried to integrate Visweswaran's "respect for the integrity of difference" (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 21). Thus this continues to bring up the following questions, who has the authority to speak? and who can speak?

> It is possible (and most feminists might claim it is crucial) to discuss and negotiate one's final presentation of narrative with informants, but this does not eliminate the problem of authority, and it can raise a host of new contradictions for the feminist ethnographer. (Stacey, 1988, p. 24)

Even though I did member checking with my research participants, I argue that "the problem of authority" and the ensuing contradictions are issues that one must remain aware of rather than trying to eradicate them (which is impossible given the nature of research itself).

Feminist ethics and responsibilities

Feminist ethics of "reciprocity, reflexivity, honesty, accountability, responsibility, and equality, etc." (Skeggs, 2001, p. 433) ground all aspects of feminist ethnography (Skeggs, 2001;

Stacey, 1988). Reflexivity, the researcher's reflection on her practice, interactions, power, position, and influence in the field (Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 211; J. Lal, 1996), is an ongoing process throughout doing and writing feminist ethnography and another required element of feminist ethnography.

Feminists' honesty, respect for participants, attention to the power differentials in the relationship between researcher and researched, and their ensuing efforts of reciprocity in order to give back to the participants are commitments to feminist ethics and responsibility which I tried my best to adhere in this study. However, Stacey (1988) brings up the issue of "whether the appearance of greater respect for and equality with research subjects in the ethnographic approach masks a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation" (p. 22). Stacey is referring to the exploitative nature of ethnographic data collection, the desertion of the researched by the researcher at the end of fieldwork and the betrayal of the intimacy when a researcher represents something about a participant's story that they do not want revealed (Visweswaran, 1994). I was particularly mindful of these issues since I have an existing relationship with the key informants of my study, the owners of "K," and because of my self-identification as a SAA. Furthermore, I have formed relationships with the other three participants and continue to maintain contact with them after the data collection phase of my study. I used ongoing field notes and memos to help me establish boundaries and maintain an ethical stance throughout this study. It was hard at times because I had to continually reflect throughout my data analysis in order to do my best to represent their stories ethically (see pages 86-89). Writing about my positionality throughout the different phases of the study helped in this endeavor.

Feminist ethnography made me question my assumptions, values, my positionality as a SAA researcher and consequently my status as a so called 'insider' or 'native' researcher (K. Narayan, 1993), and the notion that I was engaging in emancipatory practice. Lal (1996) sums up my position on feminist ethnography beautifully when she argues:

It is only through an examination of one's politics and accountability, in questioning

where and how we are located, that will get us out of mere reversals of dualisms … and

on to a more productive engagement with nature of our relationships with those whom we

study and represent, and … in ensuring that the "object of knowledge be pictured as an

actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or resource" (Haraway 1988a:592). (p. 116)

Feminist ethnography has lofty and idealized goals that might not seem to be fully in

touch with reality; but I argue that these are ideals that researchers like me should aspire to in

their commitment to ethical research. These goals have kept me focused on the inherent tensions

and contradictions in the way that I did and wrote feminist ethnography and hopefully lead to

better research.

Researcher positionality

A critical aspect of feminist ethnography is the requirement that the "ethnographer

situates [locates] herself and integrates her feminist views with her methodological approach"

(Reinharz as cited in Buch & Staller, 2007, p. 192), and that her "acknowledged political

commitment" (Dickens as cited in Skeggs, 2001, p. 429) informs every phase of the research.

Positionality or location is not just the identity or background of the researcher. It is the enacted

positionality of the researcher (Haraway, 1988; J. Lal, 1996; Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004). This

enacted positionality situated me, the researcher, as an inquirer with a partial and finite

perspective ("view from somewhere" as opposed to a "view from nowhere;" Haraway, 1988, p.

590) producing situated knowledges (knowledges shaped from my positioning). Positionality

makes me responsible for my knowledge construction, knowledge claims, and enabling practices;

thus I am "called into account" (Haraway, 1988, p. 590) for my research. Enacted positionality is

a hallmark of good feminist research that challenges the traditional, dehumanized, and objective social research methodology.

Using feminist ethnography forced me to think through my actions and my accountability to the research participants, the SAAs. Foregrounding my positionality as a researcher, I realized that I was both subject and object of this study. This made me reflect on my positionality and my multiple identities – South Asian, postcolonial feminist, American researcher to name a few. Moreover, the SAA identity did not make me an insider or a native researcher (K. Narayan, 1993) with more insight or more rights to research this group. In fact, this is a false identity that erases differences of privilege, class, gender, religion, and so on. In other words, the SAA identity is not an essentialized identity that makes me the same as my participants or gives me the right to represent them. I do not have the authority of representation. In other words, I was not the authority on the SAA experience. This meant that I had to listen carefully to what my participants were saying, interpret and write ethically, and make sure to double check my findings with the research participants.

As a SAA who completed my K-12 schooling in South India, I too had preconceived notions about what it meant to be South Asian—one had to speak a South Asian language and know one's ethnic origins (which part of the subcontinent your family is from). Furthermore, I had learned a particular version of Indian nationalist history in school, consequently, I held the belief that Hinduism was the religion of India, and that Indians fell into two main racial categories, Aryan or Dravidian. The lighter skinned North Indians were Aryans and the dark skinned South Indians were Dravidian. It was not until I took a few South Asian history classes at graduate school that I realized my knowledge of India was partial, and constructed through a particular nationalist lens. The classes and readings pushed me to critically analyze my knowledge and beliefs about India. In addition, I have strong opinions about the Hindu-Muslim communalism and the ensuing violence in India, and the rise of the Hindutva in India and the

U.S. All this came to bear as I conducted and transcribed my interviews, analyzed my data, and wrote up my findings.

I found that I was judgmental and found it challenging to be ethical and responsible in my data analysis. One of the challenging dilemmas in my study was when one of my participants, Satya, informed me that she and her father were members of a religious organization that is associated with the Hindu Nationalists and her obvious pride in belonging to that organization. I wrote about my reactions in my field notes and reflected on this data for more than a year before I was able to analyze these findings, because I wanted to tell her story with ethical and responsible representation.

Another research dilemma was that even though I critiqued binaries and dichotomies, I imposed binaries on my participants. To illustrate, even though my participant Gallifrey said that he is both American and Indian and did not see a separation between the two, I insisted in one of earliest drafts of my findings that his salient identity was Indian. It was only after a discussion with my methodologist that I realized I was imposing binary and fixed identities on my participants which I did not take on for myself.

I also faced an insider/outsider researcher dilemma in my data collection phase. My participants assumed that we had a shared history and culture, because I was SAA so there was a sense that I was an insider. My participants did not have to explain the context or meanings to me, because at times, I did feel like an insider. Having grown up in India, I was familiar with the language of skin color – fair and dark, not black and white – as well as the value of skin color in India – that fair skin was more valued than dark skin. When talking to Gnana, knowledge about the Partition put us on a "plane of understanding." I realize now that this type of insider knowledge gave me access. But at other times, insider knowledge evaded me. I do not understand Hindi, so I had to keep asking them to translate Hindi words to me. I was definitely an outsider. Therefore, as a corrective, I made sure that even if I did know what they were talking about, I

asked the participants to explain different social practices or religious celebrations to me because I wanted to hear their descriptions of them.

I have continued to struggle with dilemmas such as these throughout the study. Obviously, the power relations are skewed in my favor in this endeavor, since as the researcher I am writing this up, so it behooved me to tell their stories without a negative framing. I did not want to betray their trust in sharing their lives with me like Visweswaran (1994) warns about or skew their stories to make my argument. In addition, I did member checking with the participants before I submitted the final draft.

Data Collection

Research site

The research was conducted at "Summer," a college town, in a northeastern state with Asian Indians making up about 1% of the total Summer population. "The university" is located in Summer. There have been quite a few studies conducted on SAAs in New York (Fisher, 1980), New Jersey (Bhatia, 2007), and California (Murti, 2010) which have the largest Asian Indian population according to the 2010 U.S. Census (Hoeffel et al., March 2012) and in larger cities (Fisher, 1980) and urban areas (Murti, 2010), so I chose to do a study of SAAs in a smaller city with a diverse SAA population made up of different groups, such as students, academics, physicians, professionals, and business owners. In addition, I had access to SAAs in this city through the owners of the Indian restaurant "K," and my familiarity with the city. Summer was an ideal research site for my study because I could collect the racialized narratives of SAAs from a diverse group of SAAs living in a non-urban, predominantly white location and analyze those

narratives for the relevance of the concept of race in the South Asian American experience in the U.S. and how SAAs learn to become racialized.

My primary research site was "K," the Indian restaurant, a popular gathering place for SAAs in Summer, since there is no particular meeting place for SAAs in this city. "K" was an ideal location to observe the interactions within the SAA community and between SAAs and non-SAAs. The owners of the restaurant gave me access to have "close and prolonged interaction with people … in their everyday lives …[to] better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviors" (Hammersley as cited in Tedlock, 2000, p. 456) of my informants. I also met with research participants at their place of work or study, the university, and visited some of their residences.

Purposive criterion sampling and recruitment

Purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to identify the participants in my study, since I wanted to select the most information-rich cases that met a predetermined criteria (Patton, 2002). The predetermined criterion in this study is South Asian American and South Asian Americans are defined as U.S.-born or naturalized U.S. citizens or permanent resident immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and diaspora living in the U.S. (a) who self-identify as SAAs and (b) whose roots can be traced back to present-day India.

After two months of participant observations at "K" and collecting rich and detailed narratives from three one-hour interviews with one of my participants, and due to the nature of case study and narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2008), I decided on a sample size of four participants coming from different SAA backgrounds, ages, and experiences. My recruitment strategy was word of mouth, since SAAs in Summer were interested in being part of my study. I had known three of my participants, Gallifrey, Satya and Persis, before the study, but I had only met Gnana in passing before my interviews with her. I approached Persis' husband to ask him if I

could use "K" as my primary research site to conduct my participant observations. He was the person with whom I was most familiar and the one who was in-charge of the daily management of the restaurant. He agreed to be one my key informants and signed the letter of agreement. Once I had the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval to conduct research at "K," I met again with him to discuss the scheduling details of my participant observations with him. He gave me open access to "K." I also asked his wife Persis who works with him at "K" to participate in the study and to be another one of the key informants. She agreed.

In terms of recruiting the other three participants, I asked Gallifrey and Satya to be in my study, since I was already acquainted with them. I reconnected with Gallifrey one evening as I was doing observations at "K." I spotted him strolling by as I was having dinner at one of the outside tables at "K." We talked for about two hours. I asked him if he would be part of my study and he agreed to participate. Unfortunately, he was moving back to his hometown in the same state in the next couple of weeks, so our first two interviews were on the phone. The third was on campus at the university in Summer. He also identified a mutual acquaintance of ours, Satya, a SAA student at the university who was an active member of a South Asian interest sorority, as a potential participant for the study when I asked him for possible research participants. I asked Satya via email if she would be interested in participating in my study and she agreed. Satya was a regular customer of "K" and I had met her there once. Gnana was referred to me by a mutual friend who emailed her and asked her if she as a SAA would be interested in participating in my study. She also agreed.

Participant profiles

Three women, Gnana, Persis, Satya, and one man, Gallifrey were the four research participants. Gallifrey and Satya, the twenty-something first-generation SAAs, were students at the university in Summer during the data collection phase of the study. Gnana and Persis are immigrants from Pakistan and India respectively.

Similar to the U.S. 2010 Census data for Asian Indians, educational attainment of the fathers of the participants in the study is high (see Table 4-2). One has a Ph.D., two have Masters, and another has a Bachelors. In terms of the educational attainment of the participants, one has a Ph.D., two have Bachelors, and one has four plus years of college but has not graduated.

Gallifrey

Gallifrey (a pseudonym he gave to himself with a subtle nod to the Dr. Who series) is a first generation, SAA Brahmin, Hindu male born in the U.S. His parents emigrated to the U.S. from Gujarat, India in the early 1980s. His paternal grandparents live in the same household with his parents in the U.S., so he grew up with them. Gallifrey and his family speak Gujarati, a Western Indian language, at home.

Gallifrey's father was a microbiologist in India who changed careers when he moved to the U.S. He worked in a factory when he first arrived in the U.S., now he works in management for a national retail store. His mother works as a liaison between management and labor in a factory for a major food company. He has one older brother who is married to a woman from his caste, a Brahmin woman.

Gallifrey was born in a metropolitan area in the Northeast, but he grew up in a rural town with a predominantly white population in the northeastern state where this research took place. According to Gallifrey, there were three SAA students at his school including him and his older

brother, and he rode the school bus with one African American student, John, who attended the same schools as Gallifrey.

At the time of the interview, Gallifrey was a 22-year old pursing a Bachelor's degree at the university at Summer. Gallifrey did not graduate from the university and works in IT in a large city in the Northeast now.

Satya

Satya is a first generation, Hindu SAA woman of Indian origin who was born and brought up in New York City. At the time of the interviews, she was a 21-year old pursuing a Bachelor's degree at the university in Summer.

Satya is a Punjabi who according to her was raised more Hindu than Sikh. She grew up speaking Hindi. Satya and her father are both members of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu nationalist group in India "which champions the transformation of India's secular democracy into a Hindu nation" (Bose, 2008, p. 16). VHP has branches in the U.S. Satya attended the VHP camps (also known as Hindu camps) for consecutive summers growing up.

Satya's parents emigrated from New Delhi to the U.S. in the early 1980s. According to Satya, although they both had graduate degrees when they first arrived, they started at the bottom professionally in the U.S. Her father was a taxi driver and her mother was a maid in a hotel, but now he is an engineer for a well known transportation company and her mother is the director of hospitality for an international hotel chain.

Satya has one older brother, who is called Johnny by his family and friends. He is a well-known deejay in the South Asian music scene. Satya is close to her maternal grandfather and her mother's younger brother and family who all live in the same city as her parents.

Satya graduated from the university, and lives, works, and attends graduate school in a large city in the Northeast.

Gnana

Gnana is an American citizen who was born in Karachi, Pakistan of Indian immigrant parents who moved to Pakistan from North India after the Partition in 1947. Both her father and mother are of Persian ancestry. Her father's family emigrated from Persia to India in 1739. She is one of 10 children, six daughters and four sons. She grew up speaking Urdu. According to Gnana, she, like her parents, is not religious. She is a non-practicing Muslim.

Gnana was 56 years old at the time of the interviews. She emigrated to the U.S. in the early 1990s and has been living in Summer since then. Her affiliation with Summer and the university, dates back to the early 1980s when she and her husband both pursued graduate degrees and graduated from the university, got married, and had two sons in Summer. The whole family moved to Pakistan briefly for about two years when her sons were babies, later returning to Summer. She and her husband are both faculty members at the university now. She is actively engaged in the community and has leadership positions in several local and national organizations.

Her two twenty something sons are both college graduates.

Persis

Persis is a Parsi from a prominent industrialist family in Mumbai, India who immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1990s with her husband and young daughter. According to Persis, Parsis are Zoroastrians who migrated to India from Persia and settled in the state of Gujarat. Persis is

Table 4-1: Participant demographic information.

Demographic data	Gallifrey	Gnana	Persis	Satya
Age*	22	56	49	21
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Female
US Citizen	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Place of Birth	USA	Pakistan (Gnana's parents moved from India to Pakistan after the Partition)	India	USA
Immigrant or First generation	First Generation	Immigrant	Immigrant	First Generation
When moved to the US	His parents moved here in the early 1980s	Early 1990s	Early 1990s	Her parents moved here in the early 1980s
Why moved to the US	His parents moved for professional opportunities	Professional opportunities and sense of security	Better prospects	Her parents moved to be reunited with Satya's maternal grandparents
Identification	American and Indian	Citizen of the world	Indian	American and Indian
Racial identity	Indian or SAA	SAA	Indian or SAA	Indian or SAA
Religious affiliation	Hindu	Non practicing Muslim	Zoroastrian	Hindu
Ethnicity	Gujarati	Mahajar	Parsi	Punjabi
Language spoken at home	Gujarati	Urdu	Gujarati	Hindi
Parent	No	Yes	Yes	No
Number of children	None	2 - boys	2 - one girl and one boy	None
Educational level*	Senior in college	PhD	Bachelors	Senior in college
Profession at time of interview	Student/IT Entrepreneur	Assistant Director/Assistant Professor	Indian Restaurant Owner	Student
Parents educational level	Father: Masters Mother: Some college	Father: PhD Mother: Homeschooled	Father: Bachelors Mother: High school graduate	Father: Masters Mother: Masters

* At time of interview

from the Dastur family which according to Persis "is known as the priestly family." Persis and her family are practicing Zoroastrians.

Persis stated that she and her husband immigrated to the U.S. for better prospects. Her husband left India first and she joined him in a major city in the northeast with her daughter. Her son, "Z" was born in the city. They speak Gujarati at home. Persis was employed in an agency working with children with special needs in the city, but she resigned from that job when she moved to Summer eight years ago to open the Indian restaurant "K."

Persis is a 49-year old mother of a married 27-year old daughter who is a nurse and an 18-year old son who is in college.

Data collection

The two data sources used in my study were 180 pages of field notes from 74.41 hours of participant observations at "K" and 424 pages of transcripts from 13 interviews totaling 14.55 hours with four participants. The transcripts added up to 604 pages of data. Four types of data were collected: data about the SAA identity, data about the cultural practices of SAAs, data about SAAs feeling being different or *othered* in terms of race and the significations of being *othered*, and data about the agentic acts of SAAs in their conception and enactment of race.

Fieldwork and participant observation

For a little more than a year, I conducted my fieldwork and participant observations at "K" as a paying customer. I did 33 separate observations, logged 74.41 hours of participant observations, and wrote 180 pages of field notes.

Lunch and dinner was served at "K." Lunch time at "K" was usually busy. Belly dancing and live music was featured on Friday evenings on alternate months, and the restaurant was quite

busy then as well. I made sure to attend dinners on some of those Fridays, because the owners invited me. I generally sat at a table which seated four overlooking the whole restaurant unless it was very busy. It was in the back of the restaurant away from the cash register and the kitchen. When the restaurant was crowded, I would share a table with other patrons. I observed the (a) physical layout of "K," (b) demographics of participants, (c) physical location of the patrons and staff at "K," (d) interactions between the owners (Persis and her husband) and their SAA and non-SAA patrons, and (e) interactions of SAA patrons, especially my participants (Satya and Gnana) with the owners (Persis) and the other SAA and non-SAA patrons, because I was looking for "predictable patterns of human thought and behavior" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1) and the webs of significance or meaning (Geertz, 1973) of people's lives; in other words their culture.

During and after every observation, I wrote field notes. I used a Livescribe SmartPen to take notes at "K," since it functions as a pen, and an audio recording device which digitizes hand written notes. The digitized notes and audio recording were uploaded into the computer. The handwritten notes were converted into text which was then saved in Microsoft Word using another software.

Interviews

I conducted three one-hour interviews with three of my participants: Gallifrey, Satya and Persis. I conducted four one-hour interviews with one participant, Gnana. I had 424 pages of transcripts from 13 interviews totaling 14.55 hours. My plan was to conduct three one-hour structured, life history interviews with each participant following Murti's (2010) interview protocol from her study on the racialization of Indian physicians in Southern California (see Appendix A). Life story interview was used since it elicits a first-person account in the participant's own voice "in order to gain a greater understanding of cultural notions" (Tierney,

2000, p. 540) and was an effective strategy to capture the mini-biography of my participants'

cultural and racial experience over parts of their life span (Tedlock, 2000) grounded in the

historical, cultural and political context (Tierney, 2000). Seidman's (2006) three-interview series

was used to help me to contextualize the information gathered in terms of each individual

participant. Following Seidman's (2006) description, the first interview was a general background

interview; the second and third allowed the "participants to reconstruct the details of their

experience in the context in which it" (p. 17) occurred, or in other words, focused on their racial

experiences and collected missing or follow-up information.

I piloted the three structured, life history interviews (Appendix A) with a 19-year old first

generation SAA male and a SAA immigrant woman from India in her forties and refined the

interview protocol based on their feedback. Then after my first interview with Gallifrey, I ended

up using semi-structured, open-ended questions (see Appendix B) since he wanted to tell me his

story and my questions interrupted his narrative. From then on, I started the first interview with

each participant with background questions and then listened for their racialized narrative. I did

ask all the participants the following questions: (a) Would you please share any experiences

you've had in which your South Asian American identity was a privilege?, (b) Would you please

share any experiences you've had in which your South Asian American identity was a

disadvantage?, and (c) Tell me about a defining experience (s) in your life in the US when you

identified as a South Asian American.

Interviews were conducted within a span of four months. I conducted three interviews

with each participant except for Gnana whom I interviewed four times for a total of 13

interviews. Each interview was about an hour long for a total of 14 hours and 55 minutes. All the

interviews were face-to-face in Summer except for my first two interviews with Gallifrey which

were over the phone. He had just left Summer to return to his hometown in the same state and I

wanted to start with the interviews. His third interview was face-to-face in Summer. We met at an

ice cream shop and had ice cream before our interview. I had originally planned to meet and interview my participants at "K," but due to their schedules and preferences, I only conducted my interviews with Satya at "K." All other interviews took place at locations that were convenient for them. Satya and I would first eat lunch at "K" and then proceed with the interview. It was inconvenient for Persis to meet at "K" because she would be interrupted there, so we met at two nearby cafes. We always had food first and then went on to the interviews. Gnana and I met at the university for all the interviews; the first time at one of the cafes and had food first and the last two times in her office. The eating together ritual created a bond and helped with the interviewing. I did not count the time that we spent together eating and socializing as part of the interview hours.

A year after my first three interviews with the four participants, I decided to do follow-up interviews with them to get them to clarify their racial classification. I used three open ended questions generated from Rumbaut (2011; Appendix B). However, when I interviewed Gnana a fourth time using those questions, the interview was too structured and did not yield rich information. So I decided not to interview the other three participants using these questions. I did unstructured follow-up phone calls or meetings with the other three participants to clarify questions or to ask for more details.

The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and a Livescribe SmartPen, and then transcribed by a paid transcriber and me. I kept researcher notes on the interviews in addition to detailed field notes on the observations. Field notes from my ongoing participant observations at "K" informed the interview questions. I had Satya, Gnana and Persis' interviews transcribed by two different paid transcriptionists. I transcribed Gallifrey's interviews myself since the audio quality of the phone interviews was quite poor. I did double check all the transcriptions with the audio recordings for accuracy. The 14 transcribed interviews totaled 424 pages of text.

I kept two different types of memos: Audit trail and conceptual memos. I kept a daily journal entitled "Audit Trail" to keep track of all my steps in my research. I also tracked all my theoretical formulations and insights in a memo file entitled Conceptual Memos.

Data Analysis

Multiple case study

After two months of fieldwork at "K" and completing the three-interview series with Gallifrey, I discussed the stories that I had collected from Gallifrey with my methodologist. At that time, he suggested that I use narrative analysis as a data analysis strategy. This made me reframe my study as a multiple case study (Stake, 1995, 1998, 2005) as well, since Riessman (2008) argues, "narrative research is a form of case-centered inquiry" (p. 193).

According to Stake (2005), "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied," (p. 443) and in this study, the choice was made to study four SAAs to provide a deeper and more nuanced description of the racialized experience of SAAs. A case is a "specific, unique, bounded system" (Stake, 2005, p. 445) and I treated each participant as a bounded, information-rich case. The cases were instrumental and were studied together to provide insight into the relevance of race in the SAA experience. Thus this was an instrumental multiple case study (Stake, 1995, 1998, 2005) also known as collective case study (Stake, 2005).

Three phases of data analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the data collection, data analysis, and writing phases of my study. It can be summarized into three phases: Ethnographic thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fetterman, 1998), thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2008),

and CHAT (Engeström, 1987, 1999a, 2001). I used ethnographic thematic analysis as the first phase of my data analysis to give me a general idea about what I saw in my data. Secondly, I used thematic narrative analysis to construct rich personal narratives of the racialized experiences of the SAA participants. I focused on the "told" of the experience rather than on the telling (Riessman, 2008). Finally, I used CHAT's unit analysis of mediated human activity to analyze how SAAs conceptualize race and how they learn these conceptions of race. In CHAT, the narratives are embedded in their cultural historical context, at times a weakness not addressed in thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008).

I started coding my data using pen and paper and then started using Nvivo. I kept a conceptual memo as soon as I started coding to record my connections to literature and theoretical formulations as well as a "To do" and "follow up" logs.

Phase 1: Ethnographic thematic analysis

In ethnographic research, data analysis is "iterative, building on ideas throughout the study" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 93), so I looked for "patterns of thought and behavior" (p. 97) and focused on key events to analyze the culture (p. 98). I used the following three phases informed by Braun and Clarke (2006), Aronson (1994), and Boyatzis (1998) in my thematic analysis: (a) familiarizing myself with the data, (b) initial coding, and (c) finding themes.

I familiarized myself with the data by listening to the interviews several times first. In the first phase of my data analysis, I highlighted everything that seemed to me to be relevant to the racialized experience of SAAs. I highlighted large chunks of data. Then I read through the highlighted passages and created en vivo codes. I was also able to create more abstract categories from the more information-rich passages as well, but I stopped because I felt that I was getting too abstract too quickly. To illustrate, I coded Gallifrey's interviews first because I completed

double checking them with the audio recordings first since I transcribed them and found them to be information rich. After listening and reading Gallifrey's interviews several times, I created envivo codes such as "Who let the colored folk in?" and descriptive codes, such as "Gallifrey bus incident," "feeling singled out in school," etc. I was also able to create broad categories, such as race, schooling, racism, and religion and come up with the following themes: Politics of non-belonging, enactment/performance of south Asianness, and racial ambiguity. At this point, I thought that I was moving too fast with my coding and decided to go back and start methodically with thematic data analysis with the interview transcripts of the other three participants using Nvivo, the qualitative data analysis software. I coded Persis, Gnana and Satya's interviews by generating codes from the data and comparing them to the existing codes. I ended with a list of 405 codes after initial coding (Appendix C).

In the next step Finding Themes, the 405 codes were analyzed to see what they were saying about each participant's relevance of the conception of race by comparing the codes with each other and using the modeling feature in Nvivo (Appendix C) and reduced to 74 subcategories like "American," "SAA," etc. So for example, I had categorized the following codes under the broader umbrella of "American": American by birth, American by living here in America, American ideal is apple pie and baseball, American is a nationality, American way or American way of life, Difference between American nationality and American identity, exercising rights and responsibilities is being American, first generation see themselves as American, Having the right to critique America, I'm American, not entirely American or black, and Satya's mother not accepted as an American. The 74 subcategories were then narrowed down to 46 subcategories, such as "American is a racial identity", "SAA is a racial identity", etc. So in this phase, I recoded and recategorized the following codes that were under "American" in the previous phase to "What it means to be American": American by birth, American by living here in America, American ideal is apple pie and baseball, American is a nationality, American way or

American way of life, Difference between American nationality and American identity, exercising rights and responsibilities is being American, first generation see themselves as American, Having the right to critique America, I'm American, not entirely American or black, and Satya's mother not accepted as an American. Then I used the modeling feature in Nvivo to help me create five themes from the existing subcategories (see Figure C-1: Modeling the Themes in Appendix C). The five themes were: Race (Conceptualization of race), learning race, politics of non-belonging, identity, and intragroup SAA relations, and the richest theme was "Race" (Conceptualizaton of Race) with six subthemes (Religion [SAA racial identity is enacted through religion], SAA is a racial identity, American is a racial identity, racism, racialization, skin color, and playing with race). Each subtheme was richly populated with subcategories with their own properties (see Figure C-2: Conceptualization of Race Theme With its Subthemes). In Appendix C, Racial Category, SAA is a Racial Identity and American is a Racial Identity are shown as subthemes under the theme Race. I originally had SAA is a Racial Identity and American is a Racial Identity as subthemes under Racial Identity, but moved them directly under Race. Thematic analysis gave me a glimpse into the SAA experience without the nuances or subtleties into the racialized experience or the deeper understanding about the relevance of race in the SAA American experience, so I turned to narrative analysis with these themes and subthemes as a starting point.

Phase 2: Thematic narrative analysis

In the next phase, I used narrative analysis to get a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the themes excavated from thematic analysis and the stories that each participant was telling me. I identified the racialized narratives of each participant, because I wanted a full picture of their racialized experience. Narrative is "a bounded unit of speech,"

(Riessman, 2008, p. 101) not the entire biography (Riessman, 2008). Narrative is defined as a "bounded segment of interview text about an incident" (Riessman, 2008, p. 75). An incident refers to any racialized experience as directed by my research questions. The narratives are long sequences of text and some followed Labov's structural analysis with the five elements (abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation and resolution; Riessman, 2008, pp. 88-89) and others did not. I used Labov's structural analysis as a heuristic to aid with my analysis and did not break down my narrative into clauses. I used both short stories and long stories made up of text from one interview or several interviews depending on how the narrator told the story. I denote this in the narrative. The interview text was cleaned up to make it readable, so utterances, pauses, etc. have been deleted. Missing excerpts are denoted as an ellipsis (…; Riessman, 2008, p. 75).

In thematic narrative analysis, the focus is on the "told" and not on the telling or the local context of the narrative, including how the narrative was constructed (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, I did not use the dialogic style of narrative and presented only the narrator or participant's interview text. However, there is considerable focus on the macro context in thematic narrative analysis, necessary for my analysis. In this phase, I coded the data in Nvivo into racialized narratives always grounded by my research questions. I was able to construct rich and detailed racialized narratives about the research participants, such as Gnana being a mahajar (a forever immigrant), Gallifrey's "I have a name for what I am" story, etc.

Narrative analysis mitigates the power of the researcher in how they represent the participants and the implications that they draw from the data, because of the long sequences of narrative that present to the reader. These long narratives provide the voice of the participant although edited by the researcher, and not only can it be interpreted differently by the reader, but since narratives are co-constructions, new narratives are created through every reading. This is an advantage of narrative analysis that the multiple readings and new constructions of narratives can mitigate the politics of representation in the research process. I tried to use long sequences of

narrative, so my participants' voices could be heard even though it was my interpretation of my data. Moreover, I tried to present enough information that the readers could challenge my interpretation if need be and form alternative arguments.

However, in the next phase I needed a tool to analyze learning, and make the connections between the lifeworld embedded in the narrative and its larger context. CHAT helped me to do that.

Phase 3: Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) analysis

Using CHAT as a conceptual framework helped to identify and explain the what, how, and why the four SAAs in the study learned to become racialized in the U.S. I did this by first analyzing their individual operations and actions in the larger context of their social activity, and then identifying the contradictions within and among activity systems, and seeing if and how those contradictions were resolved. The changes that resulted from those contradictions might or might not have lead to learning. The contradictions in this study occurred at the level of the actions, so those actions were identified and analyzed within and among activity systems to see if learning occurred. Since this is a multiple case study, the subject of each activity system is the individual participant, Gnana, Gallifrey, Satya and Persis. Thus, each operation, action, and activity in a particular participant's activity system was analyzed from their perspective. I identified three to four activity systems for each of the participants, since "According to activity theory, actions performed in our daily life are poly-motivated; meaning they may belong to multiple activity systems; in other words, they are driven by multiple motives or objects (Leont'ev, 1978)" (as cited by Madyarov & Taef, 2012, p. 89).

I undertook the following steps to identify activity systems for the four participants since they were the subjects: I first identified the object-motive of an activity system ("identifying as

SAA," "identifying as American," etc.) from their racialized narratives, since "The boundaries between activity systems are hard to demarcate, but methodologically they could be defined by their objects" (Madyarov & Taef, 2012, p. 89). Then I identified the actions for that activity system and the different elements (mediations/tools, rules, community, and division of labor) for each of those actions. Next, I figured out the contradictions in the activity systems, since "research makes visible and pushes forward the contradictions of the activity under scrutiny" (Engeström, 1999c, p. 6) and how and if they were resolved to determine if learning and/or expansive learning (Engeström, 1987, 1999c) occurred and were an intentional or unintentional outcome.

Since life history data was collected from the participants which spanned approximately 20+ years for Gallifrey and Satya, and 49 and 59 years respectively for Persis and Gnana, the CHAT analysis captures the historicity of their lives and their "process of expansive learning [which] should be understood as construction and resolution of successively evolving contradictions in the activity system" (Engeström, 1987; 1999c, p. 6). I did an analysis of the multiple activity systems made up of the different actions across their life history to analyze the relevance of race in their experience and to learn how they became racialized.

Research quality

I was rigorous in maintaining quality in this study. Most importantly, all aspects of this research were constantly guided by my theoretical framework and research questions (Baptiste, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Persistent and prolonged observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for over a year helped with the credibility of this study. Moreover, I had access in three important ways: I am SAA, I knew the owners of "K," and I was familiar with Summer. I continuously problematized my positionality as a SAA and researcher, my subject/object position. Keeping

research memos about my reflections on the interviews, observations, and ongoing data analysis in my Audit Trail was one of the ways to ensure my transparency about my positionality throughout the research process.

Member checking is another strategy that I used to establish credibility throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was ongoing and used at the end. I asked participants if they wanted to see transcripts of their interviews and none of them did. I either met with them or talked to them on the phone regularly after the interviews, so I could clarify questions that arose from their interviews. Occasionally I asked other participants for clarification on preliminary findings. For example, one of my findings seemed to be that the Hindu religious identity was a positive identity marker and one of the participants informed me that was because there were no lower caste participants in the study. I also shared the final version of the participant write ups with them.

Peer briefing was another important component of the credibility this study. My dissertation advisor and committee chair, an identity/narrative inquiry scholar, and a race theorist were my critical peers who gave me feedback on my findings in addition to the valuable feedback from my committee. The peer debriefings were formal and informal sessions and covered theory and methodology.

Finally, I subscribe to Skeggs (2001) that "taking responsibility for the reproduction of power may be more possible than equalizing power (see Bhavnani, 1994; Haraway, 1991)" (p. 434) in a feminist ethnographic endeavor and I hope that the measures that I took to write a rich and thick study will ensure the high quality of this research.

Chapter 5

Learning Race in the South Asian American Experience

Overview

In this chapter, I discuss the findings regarding the relevance of the concept race for the

South Asian American experience focusing on how the participants' conceptions of race shaped

their experiences and how the participants learned these conceptions of race. I analyze the

racialized narratives of each of the four participants - Gallifrey, Persis, Satya, and Gnana in that

order - using activity systems from CHAT as a heuristic tool.

Gallifrey

Indian/South Asian American Activity System

Identifying as Indian: Going beyond the black/white binary

Gallifrey grew up considering himself a "regular kid" in a predominantly white rural

town until he was made to realize that he was *other* or in his case, not white, thus SAA in school.

Although he grew up eating vegetarian food and speaking Gujarati, a Western Indian language, at

home, he did not recognize that he was Indian or brown until the second or third grade when he

was asked by his white friends if he were black on the basis of his non-white skin color. This was

the start of his racialization and his realization about his racial identity.

> I think I didn't realize that I was Indian. I knew that I was Indian I guess because we
> spoke a different language at home but I never thought that it was anything special or
> different. First it was the skin color aspect of it. It wasn't anything like my parents sat me

down and said that you are brown because you are Indian or whatever. I went through school thinking that I was just a darker skin regular kid. And I guess a couple of kids from school were like, "Hey, are you black?" and I looked at my skin, "Well, I am darker than you, right so I guess I am." So for a little while I was thinking that I was black and not Indian. (Interview 1, p. 9)

Not much later on he finds out that he is not black, he is Indian.

So one day my brother heard me say something like that I am black and he said, "No, you are not. You are Indian." That's when he told my parents. Then my parents sat me down and said, "We came from India" and showed it to me on the globe. "We moved here to the United States, so basically you are American, but you are Indian. That's where you are from. That's where your ancestry is." That's when they actually sat me down and explained it to me. And that's when I realized that I wasn't entirely American or black, that I was actually Indian. There was actually a word for what I was. (Interview 1, p. 10)

Gallifrey realized that he was Indian. He equates Indian with language (not English, but Gujarati), skin color (not white, but brown), descent, and ancestry. He, however, is locating himself in the black/white binary in the U.S. context when he says, "I wasn't entirely American or black," and conflating American with white as Mazumdar (1989) and Prashad (2000) argue, most SAAs do. This conflation of American with white comes from him transforming into an Indian kid from a "regular kid." Regular apparently is the norm which translates to American/white and Indian is not the norm rather he is the *other*, the outsider. Thus, the realization that he is brown, he is Indian, and he is not white or black. This is further illustrated by what his older brother says to him when explaining what it means to be Indian when we revisited this in interview 3:

My brother was like, "You're an idiot. You're not black. You're American technically because you were born here, but our parents are from this place [India]." He showed me a map and like, "That's where they used to live." He explained it to me, "Everyone else is white here." (Interview 3, p. 20)

According to his brother, Gallifrey is an American by technicality because of birth and residency, but all the regular Americans are whites. Because the American norm is white, American becomes conflated with race and nationality. There is a slippage here between skin color, race, and nationality.

Learning race: Using CHAT as an analytical framework

Context and activity mutually constitute each other. So the above experience cannot be analyzed if it is not seen in the space of the predominantly white town where Gallifrey and his family were the only people of color during this period of time. Thus the resources that Gallifrey is drawing on to define his identity is limited to the local school and his family. According to Gallifrey, his family is made up of Indian immigrants from an elite background – high caste Brahmin Hindus with a father who is highly educated with a Masters degree in Microbiology from India. His paternal grandparents live with his parents, so Gallifrey grew up with an extended Indian family structure in the U.S. (Interview 1) The motive-object of this activity system is identifying as Indian/SAA (Figure 5-1). There is a contradiction between skin color, racial categories, and the norms that makes one an Indian, such as ancestry and descent. Gallifrey is first named black (a racial category) based on his darker skin color (non-white skin color) when compared to his white friends which he seems to uncritically accept. The racial category of black does not seem to be meaningful to him as evidenced by his response to my probing:

> It was like "Hey, where did you get that shirt? or Hey, what time is it?" It was just another question. … I didn't think anything of it. (Interview 1, p. 10)

Gallifrey later finds out that he is not black, he is Indian by descent and ancestry – the contradiction between skin color, racial category, and ancestry. Skin color alone does not equate to a racial category; Skin color plus descent and ancestry equates to a racial category and in this context, Indian. There is a structural contradiction that for whites the common perception is darker skin color equates to blacks, but race is complicated and racial identification cannot be reduced to skin color. Gallifrey resolves this contradiction at this particular moment of his life (elementary school) and in this particular cultural and historical context by coming to the realization that he is Indian. If you are white skinned, you are white (racial category). If you are

darker than white but of Indian descent and ancestry, then you are Indian (racial category).

Gallifrey learned that he is Indian/SAA, a racial identity.

Gallifrey is learning to racialize skin color, in other words, he is starting to equate skin color with race in elementary school. First, he learns that any skin color that is darker than white is black, seemingly, there are only two races: white and black, the black/white binary. Then he learns that he is brown, but now it is more nuanced because it is brown plus descent and ancestry that make him an Indian, a separate racial category, i.e., "It wasn't anything like my parents sat me down and said that you are brown because you are Indian or whatever." So in terms of his racial identity, Gallifrey does not identify as white or black, unlike Mazumdar's (1989) contention that SAAs identify as either white or black. He is Indian/South Asian American. Gallifrey's SAA racial category is used in juxtaposition to the black and white racial identities. In other words, it came about because Gallifrey is identified as black by his white friends. Furthermore, Gallifrey does not recognize this Indian/South Asian American racial identity until he is named. This naming started with skin color, but goes beyond it to geography and ancestry.

> "We came from India" … you are Indian. That's where you are from. That's where your ancestry is." … And that's when I realized that I was actually Indian. (Interview 1, p. 10)

There is another contradiction in this narrative between Gallifrey's American nationality and his Indian ancestry when his family informed him, "basically you are American, but you are Indian" (Interview 1). In other words, there is a contradiction between his nationality/country of birth and his ancestry, language, and religion. At this point in his life, there seems to be no resolution between his American identity and his Indian identity. They seem to be distinct and separate. He cannot be a "regular American" because he is not white, however, he is "technically American" by birth.

Math Homework: Racialization of behavior

There are two other narratives that I analyze as part of the Indian/SAA activity (Figure 5-(a): Gallifrey's math homework being marked incorrect in middle school when he does not do it the American way and (b) Gallifrey joining a South Asian Interest fraternity in university so he could have SAA friends. In both experiences, the motive-object remains to identify as Indian/South Asian American.

Gallifrey recounts getting assistance with his math homework from his father, a Microbiologist from India, and getting the correct answers marked wrong for not doing them the American way.

> When I was in 7th or 8th grade we were learning Math and I didn't understand the concepts that they were teaching, so I went home and my dad showed me a different way to do it that helped me understand it a little bit better. When I went to school the next day, they marked all the questions wrong that I did in a different way and they said because they were teaching the American way not the other way. That's why I was wrong because I didn't do it the American way. … I was pretty mad well because first of all my homework's not right and second, while I was growing up my dad was my superhero. And I was like he's never been wrong and all the questions are right, so I got all the same numbers so why? Well, I felt cheated somehow. Even though that I did the work it didn't count because it wasn't the way it was traditionally taught here. … I felt like they thought it was the American ideal especially in a small town, the American ideal, American pie and baseball and all that stuff. (Interview 1, pp. 6-7)

Again, he is made to feel not American, this time not in terms of appearance, but in terms of performance. The performance on his math homework is not acceptable. He and his dad who he considers a "superhero" are both marked wrong, because their performance is not American.

The contradiction is between the American and Indian mathematics protocols. This contradiction between the rules led Gallifrey to the realization there were several, different ways to do mathematics and get the correct answer, but there is only "one correct" way in his school—the American way. It wasn't because his father was not American. It was because his father did not use the American way. Gallifrey had to conform to the American mathematics protocols. Some unintended outcomes of this activity are (a) the realization that Gallifrey is once again not

American and that he is the *other,* the outsider. He is not a regular kid. (b) Neither Gallifrey nor

his father adequately measure up to the norms, furthermore, his father is not a superhero, in fact,

he is lacking because he is not the American ideal. The contradiction between the rules does not

seem to get resolved. Gallifrey, once again, seems to call on his SAA identity to resolve the

contradiction in this activity. His performance is deemed un-American due to the school rules in

place which is in contradiction with his American national identity given to him by birth

(governed by the laws of the country), so he chooses to identify as Indian/SAA. This is his way at

a young age to negotiate the messiness of identity. An outcome of this activity is the realization

that he is Indian/South Asian American, and this is the learning that occurs from this incident. He

resolves the contradiction between the rules by taking on this SAA racial identity. Moreover,

besides racialized identity, his behavior has become racialized as well. Thus for Gallifrey,

behavior that is not traditionally American or different from American becomes meaningful in the

context of race. In other words, race is both identity and performance.

Becoming Indian/ South Asian American in a South Asian interest fraternity

Gallifrey joined a South Asian interest fraternity at the university in Summer to identify

as SAA. According to Gallifrey, "Even though I was very in touch [sic] with my heritage," he did

not have any close SAA friends or formally become a member of a South Asian organization

until he started attending the university where there was a large SAA population. Gallifrey's

existing SAA social network prior to this was made up of: (a) his paternal grandparents who live

with his parents and with whom he grew up, (b) his mother's family members who immigrated to

the U.S. during the same time period as his parents, lived with them in the late 1980s, and still

maintain a close relationship with him and his family, (c) his participation in SAA celebrations in

various locations in the Northeast, such as Indian Independence Day and *Gharbas* (Gujarati folk

dances) during *Navaratri*, a Hindu religious celebration, and (d) the annual Brahmin *Naaths* (get togethers). According to Gallifrey, his older brother attended the university and was a member of the South Asian interest fraternity on campus, so Gallifrey decided to join the same fraternity.

> I came here [the university] and joined the South Asian fraternity… It's just a bigger population of South Asians around here, so literally till I came to Summer I had very few South Asian friends. Even though I was very in touch with my heritage, but as far as best friends, all my friends were white or something. Never South Asian. My brother was in the fraternity and so I knew about it. … And when I came here, I was like, "Hey, I know a lot of the guys, so I might as well pledge the fraternity." There's a lot of networking opportunities and good jobs and stuff like that. "So why not, I'll do it." (Interview 3, pp. 11-12)

Gallifrey became part of an American institution, a fraternity, to have SAA friends and network with SAAs, in other words, be South Asian American. For someone like Gallifrey who grew up in a predominantly white town where he was an outsider and without having many resources to support his SAA identity, his choice to join a South Asian interest fraternity of which his older brother, someone he admired, was a member is not at all surprising. Furthermore, according to Gallifrey this is an organization that provided him a community; that provided him with resources like networking and internships.

> Yeah, like my first internship. I called up one of the alumni brothers and I was just like, "I need an internship" and he was like, "Cool, come on down" and he gave me an internship. Like all my friends, internships, we just get them. We know who to call whatever industry we're in. So it's like in medicine or engineering or information sciences or hotel and restaurant management is one too. (Interview 3, p. 16)

Gallifrey joined the SA interest fraternity to (a) be a part of his brother's organization, (b) have close SAA friends, and (c) network professionally.

Even though Gallifrey's South Asian interest fraternity is open to all students, the fraternity membership at this university is made up of only SAA students. As Gallifrey put it: "It's like South Asian people want to pledge in a South Asian fraternity. It's like they know that it's South Asians so they come. Like a niche market, I guess" (Interview 3, p. 17). The fraternity

members are either U.S.-born or those who immigrated here at a young age. At the time of these interviews, there was only one international member.

Gallifrey argues that what is South Asian about his South Asian fraternity are SAA values like doing well in school, getting good grades, respect for elders, not drinking and smoking in front of your parents. These values are all model minority characteristics that define SAAs as a model minority group (Abraham, 2006; Bhattacharjee, 1992; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). He uses education and drinking to explain the contradictions between Indian cultural norms and American cultural norms:

> Mainly it's the education thing and getting a job. Everyone's focus is on getting the highest GPA possible. You get peer pressure on the weekend, I have to study for this test and it's like, no, you have to drink anyway. We joke around and do that, but if someone's got a test, we don't call that kid during the weekend because we know he has something to do. …It's like the main values that we all have in common. Education is key. (Interview 3, pp. 15-16)

Gallifrey points out the peer pressure of having to drink in college, but this is absent in the SA fraternity when it affects success in school. As Gallifrey puts it "Education is key."

The other aspect about drinking that differentiates a South Asian fraternity from the other American fraternities on campus according to Gallifrey is how the SA fraternity brothers hide their drinking from their parents, while their white counterparts say "I'll get a couple of bottles" when they hear that the parents are visiting. Here drinking is a contradiction between Indian cultural norms and American cultural norms.

> We all have an apartment together and my friend's like, "My mom is going to be visiting." We know no beer at all. We [SA fraternity brothers] know no beer at all. …If you smoke cigarettes, not this weekend. Hide that. … If I tell my white friends that my parents are coming this weekend, they are like, "Word, I'll get a couple of bottles and we'll do this something." And I'm like, "No man." (Interview 3, p. 14)

It is not that SAAs do not drink or smoke, but that they hide it. It is a different way of coping and behaving.

For Gallifrey, being SAA seems to involve a fair amount of secrecy among the youth to maintain the model minority myth. Moreover, the parents seem to be aware of the drinking culture, but are complicit with the faux secrecy in order to maintain the model minority myth.

> Like my parents don't care if I drink, so if they found bottles laying around… Like they just know that we smoke hookah and stuff, but we don't tell any of our parents, so when they're visiting the hookah is not there.…When my brother was at [the campus] after he turned 21, he and a couple of his friends were tailgating all day at a football game. It was my brother's birthday, so my parents decided to come up and surprise him. … my brother came in half hour later pretty drunk and [was] like, "Hey mom and dad" and my dad was laughing, but my mom was like, "You drink? Blah, blah, blah." (Interview 3, pp. 14-15).

Gallifrey's parents know that their sons drink and smoke. In the incident above, they saw their drunk son, yet the drinking and smoking takes place in faux secrecy.

There are several contradictions occurring here: (a) the contradiction between the fraternity/the university cultural norms and model minority conventions (i.e. focus on drinking vs. focus on education), (b) the contradiction in rules, and (c) the quaternary contradiction between two activity systems - the object of one "identifying as SAA" activity system and the object of the other "identifying as American" activity system (Figure 5-1). The motive-object of this activity system is to identify as Indian/SAA, but to do so, Gallifrey, interestingly enough, has joined an adaptation of an all American institution, a SA interest fraternity. But while being part of a fraternity at the university satisfies his needs to belong and identify as SAA, this activity has produced an unintentional outcome that of also "being an American."

At this time in his life, Gallifrey seems to have at least two distinct and separate identities co-existing together, American and Indian. According to Gallifrey, this is the first time he is in a setting where he has an opportunity to be SAA or as he put it, find his "niche market," so his actions seem to be shaped by his need to define his South Asian Americanness in his narratives. His stories do not have any soft edges or grey areas, i.e. only SAAs do not drink in front of their parents as opposed to all Americans do. Notice that his discourse (juxtaposition) with "black" has dropped off. His comparisons are now entirely American (white) and Indian (brown).

Gallifrey resolves the contradictions about drinking as discussed in the next activity system, "Becoming American." He resolves the quaternary contradiction between the motive-object of this activity system "identifying as Indian/SAA" and the motive-object of the "identifying as American" activity system, by identifying as hybrid American and Indian (discussed on pp. 132-134). This hybrid identity is an evolved motive-object, leading to a new activity system (Figure 5-1).

Becoming American Activity System

"Who let the colored folk in?": Feeling discriminated in school

Schools are one of the mediators for Gallifrey becoming American. K-12 schools were the primary sites for Gallifrey's racialization and encounters with racism and his realization that he was the *other*. Gallifrey learned that to be American, he had to know and follow American rules and regulations that were implemented and enforced by the teachers and school administrators as illustrated in the math homework incident.

However, there were norms that Gallifrey could not follow that made him un-American – his marked body. According to Gallifrey, although his fellow students noticed his skin color, "the kids never really questioned why is he of another color" or treated him differently because of it. But this was not the case with the parents, teachers or school administration. Early in his first interview, he brought up how he felt discriminated by the teachers and parents in his hometown. He recounts one of his earliest encounters with racism at a friend's birthday party when he overheard one of the parents asking, "Who let the colored folk in?" referring to him.

> Some of the teachers didn't like me and looking back on it people that lived in the area forever …they grew up in a really sheltered type of environment, so a lot of people that I felt discriminated from. For example, I went to my friend's birthday party and when I got there and there were all these other kids that I knew from class and the parents were there

too. And they're all drinking, [and] one of them was like, "Who let the colored folk in?" and that was kind of weird. (Interview 1, p. 6)

He reads this as racism based on his darker skin color. In this incident, race is conceptualized and equated to skin color. For the parent, Gallifrey is a marked body that is different from the norm because of the color of his skin. Gallifrey is not white. For Gallifrey, he *becomes* a marked body, *different* from the others. He is the *other*.

Playing with race: Playing with the English language

Gallifrey negotiated the contradiction of being a non-white American in a predominantly white town by playing with identity and language. Gallifrey stated that, "growing up, we were pretty much the only colored kids because there's me, my brother, he's older, he's 28 now, and my mom and my dad and my paternal grandparents that were with us" (Interview 1, p. 3). There was little racial diversity in his hometown until his high school years when there was an inflow of immigrants of color, including SAAs into that area. Then there were four people of color in his school: three SAA students: him, his older brother and one other; and an African American student, John.

What Gallifrey did along with John was to play with race in his effort to be American. They both played with the English language in high school to get a reaction from the whites. For example, John would speak Ebonics when he usually did not speak that way, because the white students expected him to, and Gallifrey spoke to the new student teacher with an Indian accent even though he did not have one, because she found it credible that he was a newly arrived Indian immigrant.

> We [John and Gallifrey] definitely bonded over … observing how white people react in certain situations. …This one kid, we were just chilling and John, he was a big black guy, he was kinda scary. And he just went up there and talking in extreme Ebonics when he usually doesn't even speak that way, and we just did it just to see how he reacted. … I just thought that it was funny to mess with him. The white people… well I don't know, I

> think that I am being racist. … I think that it's fun messing with white people and if someone heard me say that, they'll be like that's a terrible thing to say. …Pretty much, he [John] doesn't talk that way and he knew this is what this kid expects, but he wouldn't be surprised hearing those words coming out of his mouth, so he just pretended. (Interview 2, pp. 26-27)

John played with the racial stereotype of African Americans speaking Ebonics and it seemed to be an opportunity for him, a student of color in a predominantly white school, to turn the table on the white majority. The ploy only worked because John was expected to behave in stereotypical ways: Speak Ebonics, be scary because he is a big African American male, etc., so when he spoke Ebonics, it is not questioned. Gallifrey participated in this role playing/enactment of race and points out these racial stereotypes, but Gallifrey himself seemed to have internalized some of these racist stereotypes as well: "John, he was a big black guy, he was kinda scary."

Next, in high school, Gallifrey pretended to be an Indian fresh off the boat by speaking with an Indian accent when he met a new student teacher. None of his classmates disclosed the truth to the teacher and she believed that he was a recent Indian immigrant until one of the other teachers enlightened her by disclosing that Gallifrey was American and that he was just "messing with" her. Here he is playing at being an Indian. Gallifrey can play at being Indian only because he is intentionally identifying and being American. It is believable because he looks Indian. At the same time, this new immigrant identity is not a positive portrayal of Indians. It is a caricature.

> I always spoke in an Indian accent and she [the new student teacher] was completely, a hundred percent convinced that I was straight from India. And then I guess she was speaking to one of the other teachers and she was like, "Yeah, that kid from India, I have some trouble making him out sometimes," and then one of the other teachers was like, "He was born in America. He has been going to this school like forever. He's not from India. He's just messing with you." (Interview 2, p. 28)

Humor seems to be a coping skill that both John and Gallifrey used. They appropriated racist stereotypes that were used to make fun of them and make them the *other*, and performed these stereotypes with intentionality. They also succeeded in subverting these stereotypes by getting people to laugh with them or in some cases to laugh at others, the white majority. These could

also be read as performances of racial prejudice against whites, blacks, and Indians. This shows in

a small way why race and racism are such complex and complicated concepts which are

extremely difficult to define.

Dating

The American cultural norm, dating, is one that Gallifrey engages in, but hides like his

drinking and smoking from his parents.

> If I'm dating someone I won't mention it to my parents or anything. They assume at this
> age that I'm in the dating scene and stuff like that. … My brother and his wife now, they
> were dating for 8 years. For the first four or five of it, wow, my parents had no idea.
> (Interview 1, p. 22)

According to Gallifrey, this is common among other SAAs as well – his brother kept his dating a

secret for at least five years. Gallifrey's girlfriends also kept their dating habits secret from their

parents. According to the excerpt below, he was introduced to his girlfriend's parents as her

brother's friend.

> We [Gallifrey and his girlfriend] both grew up in America. Our parents were straight
> Indian. If I ever met her parents, I was her friend's brother and I was just giving her a ride
> somewhere or something like that. The girl that I am talking about, I met her parents a
> couple of times, but they are still under the impression that I'm her brother's best friend
> or something like that. So, yeah, it's secretive between parents and stuff like that, but
> outside of that, between our friends and stuff, it's completely open. (Interview 1, p. 24)

So SAA children who were born and brought up in the U.S., seem to be hiding aspects of their

personal lives from their Indian immigrant parents in their efforts to be American.

Gallifrey's "becoming American" activity system is fraught with contradictions some of

which have been resolved and others that are still being resolved and some that may never be

resolved. Gallifrey regards himself as an American, but because of his marked body, he is either

not seen as American or treated as *other*. This contradiction is one that in the current social

political context of the U.S. does not seem to be resolvable. The contradictions in the incidents

where Gallifrey perceived himself to be discriminated against and where he was playing with race in school are on the basis of his marked body – his skin color. These are secondary contradictions between mediating artifact (skin color) and division of labor (his white friends, the white students, white parents, white teachers, and white school administrators). He is not white, therefore not American in his predominantly white hometown. These contradictions have not been resolved.

In the drinking and dating scenarios, Gallifrey and the other SAAs have resolved the contradictions by hiding their behaviors, which according to Gallifrey is different from the American way, but not the SAA way. Gallifrey claims that it is usually acceptable in American cultural norms for adult children to drink with their family, while Indian cultural norms dictate that adult children do not drink in front of their parents as a sign of respect for their elders (Interview 3). Thus, Gallifrey and his SA fraternity brothers do not drink in front of their parents. According to Gallifrey, this is a distinguishing feature of the SA fraternity. SAAs' parents might have knowledge of their adult children's drinking, but they are complicit with the secrecy. This "we don't drink in front of our parents because it is disrespectful," is the SAA version of drinking, an alternative way of drinking. This is much like the SAA dating scenario, another contradiction between American and Indian cultural norms. The fact that Gallifrey is dating is a resolution of the contradiction. The secrecy between SAAs and their parents is another contradiction that has cultural staying power and seems to be the SAA way.

Identifying as Brahmin

Even though Gallifrey identifies as an American and a SAA, another identity that is significant to him is his Brahmin identity. It is important to keep in mind that the Brahmin identity is only meaningful in the larger context of Hinduism and the ensuing caste system.

Gallifrey brought up being Brahmin in the third interview when I asked him what South Asian

American meant to him and he talked about the importance of Indian values and traditions. So I

asked him, "What would be some of the traditions and values that you would continue?" His

response was religion (Hinduism) and his Brahmin caste.

> I don't want to force religion on anyone, but it's cool that my grandfather knows Sanskrit
> and all these pujas and stuff as a Brahmin. According to my caste, I'm supposed to be
> like a priest or something….if you have a housewarming puja and stuff like that,
> technically only a Brahmin can do that. … I think that it'd be really cool to kind of learn
> it because that way one of us knows it down the line. Me and my brother talk about it, but
> one of us has to learn it at some point, so we can keep that going. …. Religiously
> speaking I've lived x amount of lives prior to this one and I'm a Brahmin now which
> means I did something awesome in my last life. This is my only chance. I can either
> attain nirvana and like enlightenment or I start from the scratch again and I start all over
> again. … Technically, this is my last life… Me and my friends, we all often joke, "I don't
> know what we all did in our last life apparently we were awesome. We're definitely
> screwing it up now." (laughter). And another thing, my parents would like me to marry
> within the caste. (Interview 3, pp. 24-27)

Here he is explaining what his high caste Brahmin identity means to him and the saliency of this

identity to him, his brother and his Brahmin friends in the U.S. In other words, the superiority of

the Brahmin identity continues to be relevant even here in the U.S., amongst the South Asian

diaspora. This is also reminiscent of his brother and his parents telling him about his Indian

ancestry in elementary school and its importance to his racialization as an Indian.

By invoking his Brahmin caste identity and his ancestry, Gallifrey is (wittingly or

unwittingly) drawing upon Aryan race theory from the Indian subcontinent (Loomba, 2009;

Mazumdar, 1989; Trautmann, 2004). Aryan race theory in the context of India conflates Aryan

with ancient Indian race, ancient Indian civilization and Indian religion (Ballantyne, 2002;

Leopold, 1970, 1974; Mazumdar, 1989; Trautmann, 2004). The discovery of the Rig Veda, one of

the oldest written texts in Sanskrit, the quintessential Aryan or Indo-European language, in India -

has been taken as evidence of the Hindu/Brahmin/Aryan connection. Thus the Brahmins (caste),

Hinduism (religion), and Indian civilization (culture) has become conflated with Aryan (race).

Aryan race theory was originally invoked by British Orientalists to explain the "origins of 'Indian

Civilization'" (Mazumdar, 1989, p. 48). It has, subsequently, been appropriated by the Indian

nationalists and high caste Hindus on the Indian subcontinent and Indians in the diaspora to

combat racism and discrimination against them (Mazumdar, 1989; Prashad, 2000). Historically,

the Aryan racial identity equates to a white racial identity in the U.S. and SAAs were classified as

Aryans in the U.S. when they first arrived here in the early 1900s (Mazumdar, 1989). In

Gallifrey's story, this rich, racial heritage is invoked: to be Brahmin (a caste) is to be Hindu (a

religion) and to be Hindu is to be Indian (a race). For him, his caste and religion are part of his

racial identity. In other words, caste and religion are attributes of the Indian race. For Gallifrey,

race and religion are not binaries. Race in this conceptualization is more than skin color or

biology; it is connected to both biology and culture, specifically religion and caste like

postcolonial scholar Loomba (2009) argues (Gnanadass, 2014).

Fasting: Racialization of religion

Gallifrey performed his Hindu Brahmin identity, an embodied identity, on a daily basis.

For example, he did not eat meat growing up. But the only vegetarian option at his school was "a

piece of bread with cheese" and he would "put potato chips in it for special flavor." His family

fasted on Thursdays, so he decided to fast as well one Thursday.

> So I had a banana and milk. I ate it and I was fine. I was just sitting there you know
> talking to my friends letting them eat their lunch when the teachers came over. They
> asked where my food was and I'm like "I ate it." "What did you have?" I said, "I had a
> banana and milk." And they called my parents and then they called the authorities and
> told them that my parents didn't pack no food and stuff like that. They actually called the
> authorities first and then my parents and then my dad got mad because he was like,
> "What is this? Why are you questioning the way that we are doing things? He said that he
> wanted to fast and we let him fast. You know that he's not going to die. It's part of our
> religion, so you have no right to call the authorities before speaking to me about it." So
> that one instance had a pretty big effect on me. My parents were really pissed after that
> and they didn't really trust the school as much. Well, they called the authorities before
> contacting my parents. And they already tried to file a complaint saying that I am being
> starved or whatever, but they never took the time out to see why I was doing what I was
> doing and that I was fasting. It was part of a religious thing. (Interview 1, pp. 8-9)

Gallifrey resented that the teachers never asked what he was doing and did not know that he was fasting, a religious practice. This is why both Gallifrey and his father understood this incident as racism. Being a vegetarian and fasting set him apart from the American way, or in other words, performing his religious identity or a non-dominant, underrepresented "foreign" religion (Hinduism) in this rural town had punitive consequences. Why was Gallifrey's fasting, a ubiquitous religious practice, treated by his teacher as unacceptable? I think Gallifrey's non-whiteness (both biological and cultural/religious) had something to do with it. This made it a racialized experience. The teacher's behavior was not simply religious ignorance, bigotry or insensitivity because if it were someone of the dominant race and religion that was fasting, a White Christian perhaps, I doubt that it would have been handled the same way by the teacher (Gnanadass, 2013). Ironically, the school administrators did not have a problem with a student eating bread, cheese and potato chips daily for lunch, but called the authorities for him having eaten a banana and drinking milk. Once again, Gallifrey was not the American ideal. He was the *other*. He was a South Asian American practicing his religion. Here he was enacting his Indian racial identity through his Hindu religion. Once again indicating how religion is an attribute of the Indian race.

The fasting incident, an enactment of Gallifrey's religion, Hinduism and his caste, Brahmin, was another part of this activity system in which behavior was racialized and racist. For Gallifrey, the teachers having called the authorities without finding out why he was only having a banana and milk for lunch, were (a) racializing his religious behavior and (b) racist. The intended outcome was Gallifrey identifying as Hindu Brahmin by practicing his religion, since Gallifrey has equated practicing and enacting Hinduism with his racial identity. This was illustrated by this excerpt below when Gallifrey talked about not knowing that he was Indian or Hindu even though he was raised with the same Indian belief system of his parents:

> I never knew that I was Indian. At home we were never like you're Indian like a game plan. They [Gallifrey's parents] raised me the same way that they were raised. That Indian belief system. I was Hindu, but I didn't know it. (Interview 3, p. 19)

Gallifrey is Indian and Hindu, because he was raised in the same Indian belief system as his parents. Here Gallifrey equates Hinduism with being Indian because for him Hinduism is "that Indian belief system," subsequently, being Hindu is being Indian (Kurien, 2007). There are two primary contradictions within two of the elements inside this activity system: rules and division of labor. The first contradiction is within the rules: School lunch regulations (what a K-12 student is supposed to eat for lunch at school) and Hindu beliefs (what to do when one is fasting). It is also a contradiction within the division of labor between Gallifrey's family and the teachers. Here the teachers call the authorities without first speaking with his parents, which led to anger and mistrust of the school system on the part of Gallifrey and his parents. However, this does not deter Gallifrey from enacting his Hinduness in school. He does not resolve these contradictions, but continues to negotiate them. For example, he continues to be a vegetarian, but he does not discuss fasting at school again in the rest of his narratives. Furthermore, he learned that because of his marked body (skin color) and his "not American" behavior and practices (being a vegetarian and fasting), he was treated differently at school. The teachers (a) not asking him the reason for his behavior and (b) calling the authorities without notifying his parents were perceived by Gallifrey as racist acts, and he and his parents learned to mistrust the school system. The unintended outcome is Gallifrey identifying as *other* on the basis of his religion, thus religion becomes racialized at a young age.

The significance of the racialization of religion leads to another contradiction. Gallifrey equates Hindu with Indian, so what are Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, and other religious groups in India to him? This contradiction develops when Gallifrey discusses a defining experience as a SAA when he participated in a Hindu/Muslim riot during his visit to India in sixth grade. Gallifrey was with his older college age cousin when his cousin burned down a shop.

> It [the riots] was going on and I went to a shop with my cousin. We got all the free food and then he burned it. … There was something, either Muslim versus Hindu or India versus Pakistan, something. People were not happy with each other. …It was going around everywhere. It happened in the village. They shut down large part of [name of state in India]. … But looking back at it now, "Wow, that was domestic terrorism." (Interview 3, pp. 35-36)

After the above response, I asked Gallifrey, "How did this incident make you feel about your religious identity and about being an Indian?" He responded by revealing how the older members of his family hate Muslims and Pakistanis.

> Honestly, when it comes down to it, the older people in my family are racist. They hate Muslim people; they hate Pakistani people. … A couple of years ago, I was going to move in with my Muslim friend. I was like to my uncle, "I'm probably going to be living with "A"" … "He's Egyptian. He's Muslim." He's like, "He's Muslim and blah, blah, blah." I didn't say anything to him because there's no way that I was going to change his mind about that, but I was like, 'I don't really like the way you said that." So, they are definitely racist and it's way too late to change them. … In India, "It's Pakistan this and screw Pakistan." … It's definitely racist. You can't just blame it on nationalism. (Interview 3, pp. 36-37)

Some of Gallifrey's family in India and the U.S. seem to hate as well as foster and support Hindu-Muslim communalism much like the U.S. Hindu nationalists here in the US and India (Prashad, 2000). Gallifrey called his relatives racist. What is interpreted by scholars as communalism, "a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities" (Pandey, 2006, p. 6) in South Asia is interpreted as racism by Gallifrey, from a U.S. perspective. Loomba (2009) would call this racism as well, since she argues that communalism is the same as racism. Gallifrey himself does not seem to have resolved this contradiction, although he does have Muslim friends and does not have antipathy towards Muslims. He himself equates Hinduism with Indian.

Marriage

In this conceptualization of race, race becomes an embodied performance through religion and caste. Gallifrey and his family perform and preserve their Hinduness and

Brahminness through marriage and dating. For Gallifrey, being a Hindu and a high caste Brahmin

seem to be synonymous, except when it comes to preserving caste purity through marriage. Then

he speaks about the Brahmins as a separate group. He first brought up caste in interview 1 when

he disclosed to me that his sister-in-law was from the same caste as his family. Gallifrey's older

brother is married to a first generation SAA Brahmin woman that he met at an annual Brahmin

Naath (get together) in the Northeast and his whole family is excited that he married within the

caste.

> She's [Sister-in-law] actually, a Hindu as well. She's actually within our caste, so my
> mom's really excited about that. Actually everyone in my family is excited about that and
> they were like, "Hey, you going to marry a girl from our caste too, right?" and I was like,
> "No, probably not, but we'll see." (Interview 1, p. 23)

According to Gallifrey, the Brahmin "get togethers" are organized by the parents, so their

Brahmin children can "hook up."

> There's a Brahmin get together once every year. It's actually funny, because when they
> [Brahmin parents] first did it, we [Gallifrey, his brother and their Brahmin friends] were
> like, "They are just trying to hook us up." That's exactly what they were doing. … None
> of us hooked up except for my brother. Yeah, that's when they first saw each other and
> then started talking. (Interview 3, pp. 27-28)

The parents' plan worked because Gallifrey's brother met his wife at the Brahmin *naath* on the

East coast eight years ago, dated her for eight years, now they are married.

Although Gallifrey does not seem to be opposed to the idea of the caste system and his

brother marrying somebody from the same caste; he, on the other hand, is not keen on the idea of

marrying within the caste and would like to change this for future generations.

> My parents would like me to marry within the caste. … Thinking back on it, this is
> something we'd [Gallifrey and his brother] change as we have our own families. My kids
> can marry whoever, but my parents, they, I think at this point, don't care if I were to not
> marry within the caste but whatever. (Interview 3, p. 27)

Gallifrey does not seem committed to the notion of caste purity (Dirks, 2001; Iyer, 2009; Kurien,

2007). Unlike his brother, he does not want to follow caste marriage protocols and marry a

Brahmin woman and talks about generationally breaking the tradition.

Gallifrey's motive-object in this activity is to identify as Brahmin and the intentional outcome of this activity is identifying as Brahmin. Gallifrey not wanting to marry within the caste and not preserving caste purity is a contradiction between marriage protocols and his family members and perhaps the Brahmin *naath* members. This contradiction has not been resolved by Gallifrey, however, the Hindu Brahmin upper caste identity seems to have given Gallifrey a sense of pride and self worth within himself. It is clear that the Brahmin identity is perceived by Gallifrey to be a superior identity, even though he jokes about it with his friends. The upper caste Brahmin identity is one that is grounded in a history of caste oppression in India, however, Gallifrey does not gesture to it in his narrative. However, it is a superior identity that gives one privileges and advantages much like the white identity in the U.S. with its ensuing privilege which one remains oblivious to and does not acknowledge (McIntosh, 1988).

Identifying as a hybrid American and Indian: Intended and unintended outcomes

Gallifrey, a first generation SAA now in his midtwenties identifies as both American and Indian. He is not the third grader who found out that he is not white and that he is Indian. He is not the college student who is in the euphoric state of being surrounded by SAAs and the opportunity to make SAA friends for the first time in his life. He has through his past experiences learned to negotiate his racial identity. According to Gallifrey, there is no duality in his identity now; he is a hybrid American and Indian. He inhabits the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1999) of political (American citizen) and cultural (Indian ancestry) identities. He is not one or the other.

> I'm American. I've lived in America my entire life. I'm accustomed to the American way of things, but I'm also Indian. I don't see an extreme divide between while I'm Indian and while I'm American. I'm both. I do things culturally that Americans don't do because it's Indian tradition. I don't know if you know *Navaratri* [Hindu religious celebration] … Actually just a couple of days ago we celebrated Indian Independence Day. We think [it's] the best way to engage in and be a part of our town, and I don't see that as separate from how I act, or the way that I am from around like my strictly American friends. (Interview 1, p. 11)

For him, he is American by birth, citizenship, and by living in the U.S. He is Indian because of

Indian tradition and religion, where Indian religion equates to Hinduism and his Brahmin caste

identity. So for Gallifrey being American translates to living in America his entire life and being

accustomed to the American way of things, while being Indian is connected to culture and

tradition, thus calling forth the tradition/modernity trope – the traditional, cultural India

juxtaposed with the modern U.S. nation-state as illustrated by this quote:

> But we [Gallifrey and his brother] still have that sense of value, values instilled in us like
> the old school Indian traditional, plus the more liberal American. (Interview 3, p. 24)

Gallifrey identifying as both American and Indian is an evolved motive-object which

resolves the contradictions between the motive-objects of all three activity systems, therefore

leading to expansive learning (Engeström, 1987). The new activity system is Identifying as

hybrid American and Indian. He explains this hybrid identity when he discusses his future wife.

Although he does not want to marry a Brahmin woman, he does want to marry an "Indian"

woman. But the Indian woman that he wants to marry is not someone "fresh off the boat," but a

first or second generation Indian/South Asian like him.

> I feel if I'm gonna marry someone, that'll have to be an Indian. Just South Asian. I'm not
> really about people straight from India who got here last week, like fresh off the boat.
> Usually girls like me who are first or second generation immigrants, because we all kind
> of grew up the same way. Our parents really didn't know much about what was going on
> in America. We know more than they do, the inner workings of how social situations
> work and stuff like that. That's why I like girls that way too. (Interview 1, p. 23-24)

He wants somebody who grew up the same way he did. He seems to want somebody who can

share his Indian culture and who can navigate American society. Somebody who is hybrid-

American and Indian like him.

This hybrid identity is still fraught with unresolved contradictions. Furthermore, secrecy

about partaking and participating in American cultural norms seem to be a big part of performing

this hybrid identity for Gallifrey. Drink, but don't tell your Indian parents. Smoke, but don't tell

your Indian parents. Date, but don't tell your Indian parents. Eat meat, but don't tell your Indian

parents. Gallifrey did not start eating meat until or 11th or 12th grade when he started going out.

He said, "I didn't have anywhere to go because I was a vegetarian, so I wouldn't eat meat"

(Interview 1, p. 20). He said that he saw meat commercials on TV and meat looked good.

> One of my friends, sometimes they peer pressured me to try something. And they were
> forcing me to do it if I didn't want to, but if I wanted to they would be like, "Yeah, have a
> bite of my whatever, sandwich, chicken, whatever." But I won't eat beef. I try not to.
> Because that's the main thing, but I kind of make excuse to myself like cows are sacred,
> chickens are not….but bacon's delicious. (Interview 1, pp. 21-22)

Peer pressure and the media encouraged him to taste meat while his older brother got him eating

meat on a regular basis when Gallifrey discovered that his brother cooked meat at home.

> It looks good, so I've always wanted to try it and I didn't do it till my brother moved out
> to college. And he made chicken and vegetables or whatever and I was like, "Do you eat
> meat on a regular basis?" And he was like, "Yeah, dude, just do it." (Interview 1, p. 21)

Even though eating meat is taboo in his Hindu Brahmin family, Gallifrey eats different

kinds of meat now. He even eats beef even though cows are revered in Hinduism. His parents still

do not know that he eats meat. He does not eat it at home and according to him "That's strictly an

outside or when I'm living on my own thing … I think that they know that I tried it, but I don't

think that they put together that I thoroughly enjoy it" (Interview 1, p. 22). It is interesting to note

here that his parents might be aware that he is non-vegetarian, but he is still secretive about it and

does not do it in the open. For him this is part of Indian culture, because this is respect for Indian

culture and tradition. So out of respect for his parents which is an important aspect of Indian

culture for him, he does not tell his parents that he eats meat. He is preserving his Indian tradition

or culture. He is American, yet proud to be a Hindu Brahmin, who respects his Indian culture and

tradition.

"I won't eat beef. I try not to. … cows are sacred, chickens are not. …but bacon's

delicious" (Interview 1, pp. 21-22). This quote encapsulates Gallifrey's hybrid lifestyle. His life is

one of numerous contradictions, but he is aware of them and is learning to juggle them. Secrecy seems to be a big part of performing Indian culture for Gallifrey.

Conclusion

I identified three object-directed activity systems for Gallifrey: (a) Identifying as South Asian American, (b) Being American, and (c) Identifying as Brahmin with the outcome of Identifying as hybrid American and Indian (Figure 5-1). I focused more on the activity system "Identifying as South Asian American" in the analysis for Gallifrey, because many of the actions in this activity system also shed light on the other activity systems since actions performed in our daily life are poly-motivated (Madyarov & Taef, 2012).

As demonstrated by the activity systems, race shapes and structures Gallifrey's life in the U.S. A non-white racial identity is ascribed to him on the basis of his skin color and he is *othered* and treated in particular ways based on that non-white racial categorization. Even though he gets racially identified as black by whites in a predominantly white town, he learns to self identify racially as SAA. This SAA racial identity is made up of his Indian culture, Hindu religion, Brahmin high caste identity, and embodied practices and performances in Gallifrey's life, i.e. pretending to be a vegetarian, hiding his dating, his brother marrying within the caste, etc. This SAA racial identity goes beyond skin color to include culture, religion and caste. Race in this conceptualization is more than skin color or biology; it is connected to both biology and culture (Loomba, 2009). In other words, it ties into postcolonial scholar Loomba's (2009) argument, that not only do religion and caste overlap and are entwined with race, but that communalism and casteism are the same as racism. To my understanding, Gallifrey's conceptualization of race goes beyond skin color to include religion and caste. His conceptualization of race complicates the language of race and the material reality of racial identity, which is what critical
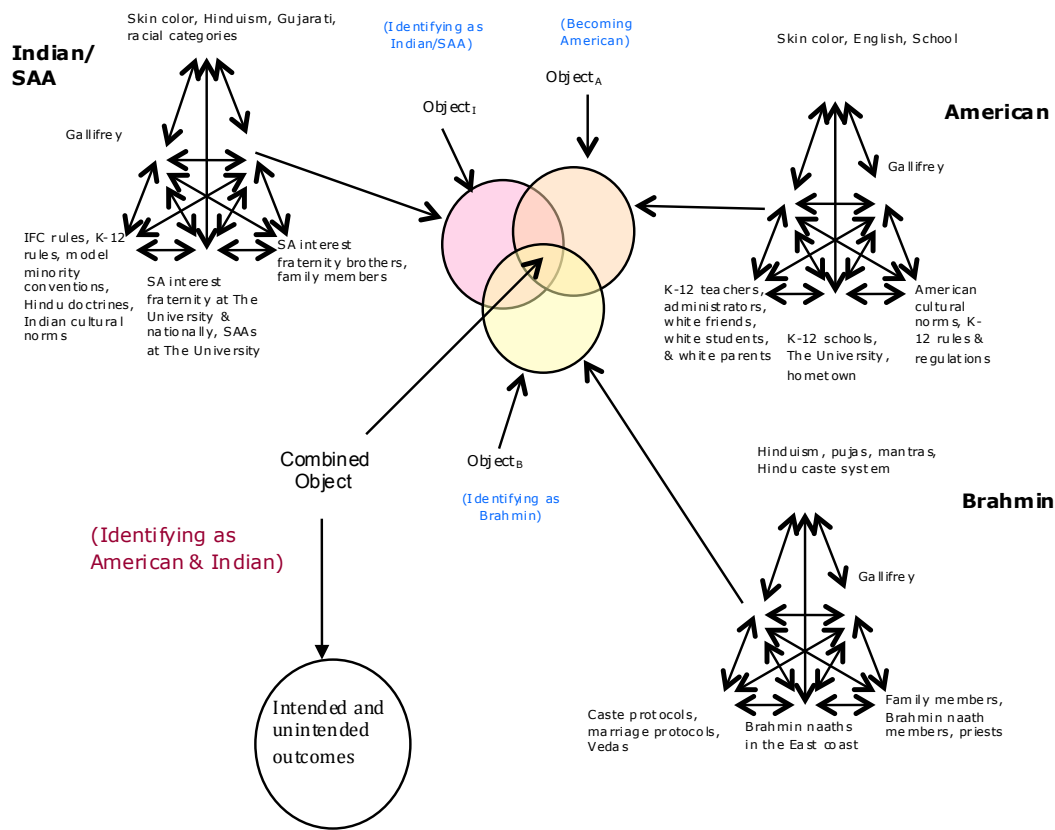
Figure 5-1: Gallifrey's activity network.

race theory argues that race is, a social construct, a learned identity. This also ties into Schueller (2003) assertion that "in the United States questions of citizenship, rights, and national character have been fundamentally tied to race, which in turn is related, to, but not totally coincident with, skin color" (p. 50).

This SAA racial identity complicates and disrupts the black/white binary, the hegemonic racial hierarchy in the context of the U.S. Although Gallifrey himself seems to hold this binary conception of race, he does not fit into this binary. Kibria (1996) and (Harpalani, 2013) argue that SAAs are racially ambiguous since they are not seen as white, black, or Asian (Asian gets translated as East Asian in popular usage and even in Asian American Studies). Kibria (1996) labels SAAs as "ambiguous non whites" since they are definitely not seen as white. Contrary to

Kibria, I argue that SAAs are not racially ambiguous. They are South Asian American, a separate

racial category. Once Gallifrey realized his SAA racial identity, he used an Indian religion

(Hinduism), culture, and caste to locate himself in this racial hierarchy.

<div align="center">**Persis**</div>

Belonging: We are asked, "Where are you from?" because "We're not white Americans"

Persis, an American citizen, problematizes the meaning of the American identity for a

non-white like herself. She states:

> I never say I'm Indian American. "What are you?" I'm Indian. People don't really ask
> whether you have an American citizenship. I think they are asking us, where are we from,
> because they know we're not white Americans. They want to know where we are from,
> in spite of having a citizenship or not. (Interview 3, p. 10)

According to Persis, an American identity for non-white Americans goes beyond American

citizenship, it is about country of origin. That is the reason people ask her and her family, "Where

are you from?"

First, Persis is speaking from a position of privilege of having legal status in the U.S. in

this narrative. She has American citizenship. Second, there is recognition here that Persis is

questioned about her belongingness because she is not a white American. There is an acceptance

that non-whites will be questioned about belongingness – "Where are you from?" and whites will

not. Since, white is the norm in the U.S., white gets conflated with American. There is also the

acceptance on Persis' part that white is American and that she is not, because her skin color is not

white. Thus not only is skin color racialized, so is nationality, i.e. American is white (Mazumdar,

1989).

Identifying as Indian

Who is an Indian?: Language and religion

Throughout her interviews, Persis has conveyed a strong sense of belonging. She made it clear that she knows who she is and where she is from. She is Indian, not Indian American. When questioned on what being Indian meant to her, she stated:

> I'm Indian, of course. Big time… I'm an Indian because I was born and brought up in India, so I'm an Indian. …That's what people would ask, right? Where are you from? From India. (Interview 3, p. 2)

India is her country of origin. Furthermore, for Persis, being Indian is also a cultural identity where she equates culture with language, religion, food, and clothing. She does this in her narrative by comparing and contrasting another family from the Indian diaspora to her family to show how culturally Indian her family is, because according to her, her family (a) speaks an Indian language at home, (b) knows more about Hinduism than even the Hindu priest of the other family, (c) cooks Indian food that tastes Indian unlike the other family, and (d) wears Indian clothes unlike the other family.

The other family members are not immigrants or first generation SAAs from India, but their ancestry can be traced back to India. They are immigrants to the U.S. from another country in the Western hemisphere.

> Yes, we [Persis' family] still speak our language. …We always talk in our mother tongue [Gujarati] at home. We follow our religion [Zoroastrianism]. We pray, like, we do what we have to do. They [other family] call themselves Indian. But they don't know *anything* about Indian culture or language [emphasis in original]. It's just that they originated from India and their ancestors are from India. But they say, "We are Hindus." They don't call themselves Indians but Hindu is an Indian, you know, religion. Right? Hinduism. So, that's what they say. If you ask them what are you, they will call themselves Hindu and [name of their nationality]. ...Their ancestors originated from India. (Interview 3, pp. 5-6)

It is important to note here, that the other family does not call themselves Indian. They are Hindu. However, Persis names them Indian because they are Hindu and are of Indian origin and ancestry.

"They don't call themselves Indians but Hindu is an Indian religion." So for Persis, Hinduism is equated with Indian, a nationalist, anti-colonial strategy used in the Indian subcontinent as well as a Hindu Nationalist strategy used in India and here in the U.S. (Kurien, 2007; Prashad, 2000). This type of thinking linking Hinduism with Indian is also in line with the Aryan myth (Ballantyne, 2002; Leopold, 1970, 1974; Mazumdar, 1989; Trautmann, 2004).

Persis also equates knowing an Indian language and Indian culture with being an authentic Indian which is made clear when she talks about her own family. They speak Gujarati at home, in contrast the other family neither knows an Indian language nor do they know anything about Indian culture. So according to Persis, they are not Indian even though she names them Indian on the basis of their Hindu religion.

Moreover, the other family might call themselves Hindu, but Persis does not find even their Hindu priest to be Hindu enough. She attended a religious ceremony that the other family's priest was officiating and according to Persis, the priest did not seem well versed in Hinduism.

> We met a [nationality] priest and English is their language and they have a very strong accent, … and he was… praying, but it was like, he knew his stuff but, of course, he had to read the book. He had to pray from the book and talk from the book and it was more talking, explaining: "Okay, now, let's worship this. Okay, now it's time to worship," and then he would say a little prayer or a slogan and then again talk and it was funny. …And every time they [Persis' husband's family] asked a question to the priest, he did not know the answer and he had to look in the book. …He had to look it up and then explain it to us as to why. Not like a regular priest. (Interview 3, pp. 7-8)

Not only did the priest not know the prayers or rituals by rote, he could not even explain their meanings to the non-Hindu Zoroastrians without his book! Then Persis compares him to a Hindu priest from the state of Andhra Pradesh in India who according to Persis "was just flowing."

> The guy [priest] … from Andhra, he was just flowing and he was a Hindu. … As he was doing the ceremony, he's able to explain in English what he's doing and why he's doing [it]. (Interview 3, p. 8)

Persis affirms that the priest from Andhra Pradesh, India is Hindu and that he knows what he is doing. The other priest appears inauthentic much like the Hindu family whom he represents. Here

even though Persis equates Hinduism with Indian, she questions the authenticity of this conflated

Indian identity regardless of the family's identification.

Persis continues to question their Indian authenticity when she recounts what clothes they

were wearing and what they were eating at an Indian festivity both families attended. The women

from both families wore traditional Indian clothes, saris and *lehengas* (long, pleated and

embroidered skirts). Persis emphasizes that it is the first time the other family has worn these

traditional Indian clothes. She further adds that this is the first time they have eaten Indian food,

although according to Persis they do have their own version of *roti* (bread) and *dal* (lentils),

which does not taste like Indian food.

> They usually wear gowns. But because of our talk, letting them know what we will be
> wearing and because we are Indians, and they love it. They love Indians. They love
> Indian music. This is the first time 90% of the crowd from [other] … family, 90% had
> Indian food for the first time. … They do eat roti [bread]. That's why they consider
> themselves Indian because they have some of these Indian habits and some of these
> Indian things that they've taken into their culture so they do eat roti. They call it roti
> only. And dal [lentils], they make dal, yeah, definitely. They … don't taste Indian at all.
> (Interview 3, pp. 6-7)

Here Persis admits that the family does consider themselves Indian, but she does not. They might

think that they are cooking and eating Indian food, but it does not taste Indian. They might think

they are Hindu, but even their priest does not know the prayers and rituals. They do not know the

language and they do not dress right.

It somewhat explains Persis' conceptualization of an Indian. So for Persis, this family is

not Indian by virtue of their lack of knowledge about the language, the religion, the clothing and

the food of Persis' India, very much a class and nationalist imagination (Chakrabarty, 2000;

Prashad, 2000). Persis' actions are situated within and inseparable from the colonial and

nationalist history of the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, the contradictions in these actions can

only be analyzed within this context. For example, Persis states, "they don't know *anything* about

Indian culture or language." Persis and her family speak Gujarati, an Indian language, at home

because Persis, her husband and young daughter immigrated to the U.S. from India in the early 1990s. In contrast, the other family who had migrated from India several generations ago, due to colonialism, probably had no contact with India. As a result, they (other family) do not wear traditional Indian clothes and their *roti* and *dal* do not "taste Indian at all."

These actions and contradictions are part of Persis' larger activity system entitled Identifying as Indian (Figure 5-2). There are contradictions between (a) Hinduism and Indian religious customs and (b) Hinduism and the priests. The contradiction is that the other family's Hinduism is not perceived to be authentic because their priest is not from India, he speaks with an accent, and he needs to look in the book to explain the rituals unlike Persis' authentic priest who is from India, who "flows," and who does not need to refer to the book to explain the rituals. There is also the contradiction in terms of clothing and food. Food and clothing are mediating tools for Persis in what it means to identify as Indian and Indian cultural norms are the rules that dictate what Indians should wear, especially to an Indian festivity and in determining what Indian food should taste like. Since Persis is the subject of the activity, it is her subjectivity that takes precedence here. Furthermore, her idea of being an authentic Indian has embedded in it contradictions from Indian history about the authentic Indian identity. The nationalist imagination is not the only perspective, nor is it static. This aspect cannot necessarily be captured fully by the triangular heuristic currently used in CHAT with tools, rules, community, and division of labor to capture the cultural-historical context of the activity. These contradictions have not been resolved and there does not seem to be any interest on Persis' part in resolving them. She seems to be pretty much fixed on the idea that an Indian is (a) a direct import from India (someone who is an immigrant from India) and (b) has a particular conceptualization of India.

Racialization on the job

The other conscious actions that make up this activity have to do with racism in the U.S.

context – the racism faced by Persis' brother. Persis recounts these racist incidents as experiences

that do not happen to her, but reflect her understanding of racism. The first racist incident that she

recounts to me is about her brother being called a "brown guy" by his Jewish boss and she even

prompts me in her Interview 1 to include it in my narrative by saying "If you want to put that in

your thing" (p. 52).

Persis' brother quit his job at the wholesale diamond industry in the city because he

overhead one of his Jewish bosses refer to him as "a brown guy," a derogatory term equivalent to

"brown skin" or "nigger" according to Persis. Persis said that her brother "was loved" by this

Jewish company, and he was hurt when his boss, an "older Jewish gentleman" called him "a

brown guy" instead of calling him by name.

> My brother worked for this Jewish company and they loved him. But my brother heard
> him [his boss] tell another guy that "I've hired a brown guy." My brother left. My
> brother said, "I'm not going back." I said, "What happened?" "I just can't go after
> hearing them talk!" … "I hired this brown guy, brown skinned." My brother left that day
> and he didn't go back. He didn't like it. He felt very uncomfortable. … He [brother] said,
> "I've lived here for so many years. I've never heard this. I know, but I NEVER heard it.
> It's like, "I hired a brown skin." (Interview 1, p. 48)

In interview 2, I asked Persis to clarify what brown skin meant to her.

> The Jewish guy he was working for was talking to another Jewish guy and my brother
> knew both of them because my brother was in the diamond industry 10 years ago. So
> they all knew him and instead of saying, "Oh, I've hired- or [Name] is working with me
> now or [Name] is back," "Oh, I've hired this brown skin," something to that level. I still
> remember how he came and he said, "I'm not going back tomorrow." I said, "What?" …
> Because they called him brown. Brown skin. That's what he told me. My brother is not
> like that. It was hard for me to understand him as well. Because, they called him brown.
> Brown skin. It's like calling a nigger. It's like calling a black nigger. Only people who
> are racist talk to you that way. And just because we are Indians, they think they can get
> away with it. And they don't like us anyway, the Jews that [are] over there because the
> diamond market is dominated by Indians and the Jews. And somebody was hiring me but
> I know how they treat you, so I did not take a job with them. I'd rather work with an
> Indian and get a little exploited, but at least you're not ill-treated. That's the word,
> because of the word, like calling a black a nigger. … Same way, that's what they call,
> brown skin. … All Indians know. Do take it as an offense. People who may know. I'm

sure some Indians, you call them a brown skin, they're like whatever, but, people will take it as an offense. [Name of son-in-law], he knows about it so, if people would have called him that, he would have taken an offense, like my brother did, because they know it is like that. They look at it that way. … Coming from an older Jewish gentleman. (Interview 2, pp. 4-7)

Persis' brother was not a stranger to his boss; he had worked in the wholesale diamond industry for 10 years before leaving for India and upon his return from India, he started working there again.

First, the mediating factor is skin color. For Persis brown is a derogatory term for Indians. "Brown guy" is equivalent to "brown skin" which is equivalent to being called a "nigger." So being called "a brown guy" or "brown skin" by an older Jewish man was perceived as racism by both Persis and her brother. Both have strong reactions to this term - her brother by quitting his job and not even returning for his pay and Persis for remembering this story from all those years, telling it to me, and then explaining what it meant to her. This was a racist way for them to be racialized, yet there are hints of racial prejudice against the Jewish in Persis' narrative as well. In this conceptualization, race has a negative connotation, because it is being equated with skin color and brown skin. The irony here is that Persis' brother is a Parsi of Persian origin and, Persis' family as Parsis are often mistaken for Jewish in the city and are often asked "Are you Jewish?" because of their light skin, black hair and brown eyes (see excerpt below in Identifying as American). Therefore, once again race is relational and becomes meaningful only in the context in which it is used.

Second, the cultural historical context is important here. According to Persis, the wholesale diamond industry in the city is dominated by the Jewish and Indians who are in direct competition with each other. So, according to Persis the Jewish look down on Indian employees because "they are in competition with us."

They [Jewish] look down upon you [Indians]. Only because they are in competition with us. Only because the other owners are Indians, and once upon a time, I believe it was more

> like 75% Jewish and 25% Indians. Today, I think it's more Indians or maybe it's 50/50. (Interview 2, p. 8)

Then she explained more about what she meant by Indian employees as competition:

> Because we're Indian, of course. Because we're Indian and their competition are Indians. So they will hire us because of our smartness or good sales skills, or whatever but they definitely are threatened by us. They see that we quickly learn from them and we move out. (Interview 2, p. 10)

So once again Persis seems to be displaying some racial prejudice when generalizing about Jewish employers and her unwillingness to work with them.

There is a primary contradiction between the mediating artifact (skin color) and division of labor (white Americans). She has not resolved this contradiction between being named "brown" and identifying as Indian to white Americans. She wants to be Indian, not brown. She does not want to be reduced to her skin color, i.e. "brown skin." This contradiction is complicated and complex. Racism is complicated and complex.

Identifying as American

Seeing skin color: Racialization of Persis

Unlike Persis who has a strong Indian identity, according to her, her American born son Z only started identifying as an Indian, as a result of having moved to predominantly white Summer in the 8th grade when he began seeing himself as "not white." This was also the beginning of his changing identity from American to Indian – a gesture to racialization of nationality (American is white), an awareness of racial politics (Indian is a racial identity in the U.S.) or both.

> In the city, he [Z] always said, "I'm American." But when he came here, first time I heard my child say that, "Oh, I feel like I'm the only Indian kid in school." But I said, "You're not. You're American, remember?" He said, "Yeah, Mom, but, in [name of middle school], it's all white." (Interview 3, p. 15)

According to Persis, Z experiences the following three things transitioning from the city to a predominantly white middle school: (a) Z feels like the *other*, "the Indian kid" which (b) causes him to start identifying as Indian, not American, and (c) conflates white with American. Z begins naming himself Indian rather than American and desires to move back to the city where there is more diversity. Furthermore, he feels conspicuous, because he is being stared at, not a desirable state of being for someone in that age group.

> "Everybody's staring at me. I feel like everyone's staring at me because I'm the only Indian kid. Why you put me in this school?" Because in the city, there were so many different kids in the city. And I said, "Z, that doesn't bother you." "Yeah, but here, there's no one. Nobody looks like me. Everybody is like, blond haired and blue eyed." According to him, white people are blond hair and blue eyed. (Interview 3, p. 19)

> Not only did Z complain about being stared at as the only Indian kid in his new middle

school, he also complains about the lack of diversity in his school. Everybody else is white, "blond haired and blue eyed." This makes him feel different, the *other*. It is interesting to note that he remarks about the "blond hair and blue eyes," because according to Persis, Z is light skinned, has black hair and brown eyes. These are defining markers of the phenotypical difference between Z and his fellow students, because according to Persis, while the family members were living in the city, they were not only mistaken for Jewish, but also Italian and Spanish because of their dark hair and light skin.

> In the city, it would be like, "Are you Jewish? Oh, we thought you were Italian," or anybody sees [name of Persis' husband], they would talk to him in Spanish. I don't know why. So, nobody believed that we were real Indians, I don't know…. With [name of husband] and [name of daughter] and Z … Yeah, they still have dark hair and, [name of daughter] and Z are very light skinned. (Interview 3, p.10)

In a racially diverse city, a person with light skin, black hair and brown eyes could be construed as belonging to different ethnic groups as opposed to living in a predominantly white town like Summer where the racial options are more limited, i.e. white or not white. This is the conundrum that Z seems to be facing in Summer and as Persis put it, "he hated it." According to Persis, they

resolved the contradiction of the white or not white binary, by unequivocally identifying as Indian. Here Indian is a racial category that they have created and it is unquestionable and real to them. This is an unintentional outcome of this activity, since these actions are part of the larger activity system Identifying as American. The motive-object of the activity is to identify as American. Persis obviously wants Z to identify as American even though she is proud of her Indian heritage.

According to Persis, skin color starts to have meaning for Z. So as Persis points out, he starts to see people as white and Indian in Summer, something he has not done before which surprises her. Persis' conceptualization of race when she talks about her son Z is based on phenotypical characteristics which is all about color: skin color, hair color, and eye color. Z feels singled out because he is different from the majority in terms of all three, but specifically he is not "blond or blue eyed" or as he puts it, he is not white. Therefore, he starts seeing himself as not American. He starts identifying as Indian. For Persis, this is an unintentional outcome in this activity where the desired outcome is to identify as American (Persis telling Z, "You're American, remember?" when he says, "I feel like I'm the only Indian kid in school"). He has become Indian in a predominantly white area. This is also a contradiction between the motive-objects of two activities – identifying as American (this activity) and identifying as Indian (Figure 5-2). Z by identifying as American in a predominantly white town, ends up identifying as Indian. Furthermore, at this point in time in Z's life, middle school, it seems to be an either or identity – he is either American or Indian. A hybrid identity does not seem to be a possibility. Z keeps saying, "I'm the only Indian kid." Furthermore, Z's and Persis' conceptualization of race goes beyond the black/white binary, to the racial category of Indian. Z and Persis seem to equate skin color to race: white skin color unequivocally to white, and not white and not black to Indian.

Z is bullied because of name and appearance

According to Persis, Z started getting bullied, because of his of name and his appearance in high school, the same school that Gnana's (another participant) sons had attended. It started in 2008 in 9th grade and continued into 10th grade. He was bullied everyday at lunch by a few of his white classmates led by the ring leader "C" who was half Muslim Iranian and half white.

> But I said, "We don't care what he is but just for your information, he's a Muslim kid
> from Iran" and were totally in shock. (Interview 3, p.23)

This was important to Persis that C is Muslim and Iranian. This is a contradiction - a part Iranian Muslim student bullying Z, a non-white, non-Muslim student of Iranian origin by calling him an Arab and Iranian in a predominantly white school setting. The context is important here since this happened in a national climate in which names, such as Arab and Iranian are equivalent to terrorist in post-9/11 America.

The verbal bullying escalated to physical bullying and Persis found out that C had scratched both of Z's arms with a plastic knife during lunch one day. Although Z did not want his mother to say anything, Persis reported it to school authorities, which led to a three-day suspension for the bullies. Z "tried to fit in very hard with those kids," but the bullying only discontinued after Persis and her husband gave C and his friends free food at "K" after a high school football game.

As it turns out, Z was not the only student of color who was bullied in his high school. His friend, who is half Mexican was bullied as well because he has dark hair and dark eyes according to Persis.

> There were a good number of kids who did a lot of bullying in high school. It was
> because whoever was bullying [name of friend] were not the same group, even though
> they were all in the same grade, but they were in different classes. Because he was half
> Mexican, and he's very fair like his Mom but he's got dark hair, dark eyes and curly hair.
> How hideous is that? (Interview 3, p. 25)

This adds to the phenotypical differences between blond hair and blue eyes and dark hair and

dark eyes. For Persis this (dark hair and eyes) seems to be as significant a marker of difference as

skin color. This seems to be the difference between American and *other* where American seems

conflated with white defined as blond hair and blue eyes. This is a politics of exclusion.

Z identifies as Indian American

Now that Z is in college, Persis says that he identifies as Indian American, adopting a

hyphenated identity. Living in the city during the earlier part of his childhood, Z identified as

being from the city or as American. Later, after coming to Summer with his family he became

Indian, not American. Now that he is in his early 20s, his identity has changed. Persis said:

> Where are you from? … Like "Z" would go "From the city," and we would say, "No.
> We are from India." He's from the city. He's an Indian American, he calls himself. …
> I'm Indian. I don't know what these kids think but they call themselves because they are
> from Indian origin. Their origin is Indian, India and since they were born here, I guess,
> that's why they call themselves Indian American. Yeah, we have our citizenship. Yeah,
> we are American citizens now but I still consider myself Indian. (Interview 3, pp. 2-3)

If we make Z the subject of the activity network, we have the resolution of two activity systems

(Identifying as American and Identifying as Indian) resulting in the evolved motive-object,

Identifying as Indian American. This is expansive learning, because Z has learned to see himself

as a hybrid and not as a binary. He is not an either/or. He is both Indian and American. This also

seems to be a resolution of the contradiction for Persis. Her object in this activity is to identify as

American, so Z identifying as Indian American seems to be an appeasement. She explains that

"Their origin is Indian, India and since they were born here, I guess, that's why they call

themselves Indian American." Here the primary contradiction in rules, between origin and

citizenship, have been resolved by her explanation.

Identifying as Parsi

Persis identifies as Indian in the U.S., but her most salient identity is Parsi, her ethnic

identity. "I'm from India but I'm a Zoroastrian from India." She is a "Zoroastrian from India"

which translates to Parsi (Lodrick, 2009). According to Persis, Parsis are Zoroastrians who

migrated to India from Persia and settled in the state of Gujarat. The year they arrived India is

debated; while Parsi tradition dates it to 936AD, other Parsis and scholars date it to 716 AD

(Lodrick, 2009). Persis is proud of her Parsi identity.

> I'm a Parsi. But, I cannot tell you or someone here that I'm a Parsi because … Nobody
> knows what Parsi is till we explain it to them. … People from India over here will all
> know. … It was a Parsi who started the airline, Air India. …So there were a lot of Parsi
> people, they have these empires and they are industrialists who've done good for the
> country and for the community. They are very well known that way. (Interview 1, p.13)

Persis explains that although Parsi is an ethnic identity that is familiar to Indians in India

and in the U.S., it is unfamiliar to Americans. They are an elite group known for their

industrialists and business empires, such as Tata Iron and Steel (Lodrick, 2009). Persis' family is

closely related to a well-known Parsi industrialist family in India. Not only is Parsi an elite

identity marker, it also is a marker of good character, since, according to Persis, they are known

for their loyalty and honesty. Both Persis and her husband have been hired because they are

Parsis: Persis in India in the example below and her husband in the U.S.

> Parsis are known to be, for whatever reason, loyal. My boss, he hired me in India because
> I was Parsi. He fought tooth and nail to take me from the hotel industry to his [diamond]
> company. … even here, [name of husband], he was given this job in an instant ... And his
> boss, being an Indian, knew all about Parsis and he hired [name of husband] in an instant
> without even thinking. Without no references and he hired him. And he told him up front,
> "You're a Parsi and I want you in my restaurant handling the cash, handling the floor,
> everything." Even payrolls, everything. … [name of husband] was with him for 15 years,
> until we moved. … But I'm just saying, he blindly trusted the man, my husband.
> (Interview 1, pp. 13-14)

I asked her what a Parsi identity meant to her and this was her response:

> Pride. I love it. I feel very proud about it. Like I said, because for whatever reason, we are
> very likeable, and we grew up within our community we were taught to be honest and

> loyal and faithful. There's always one somewhere there who does something else but, usually, we do what we say. That's what we are known for. (Interview 1, p. 16)

Persis is proud of the character of the Parsi community who according to her are loyal, faithful, upfront, and honest. Her pride in the integrity of the Parsis is evident, because she expresses it several times in her interviews. But there is a contradiction like I mentioned above: people in the U.S. do not know about this identity and this is problematic for Persis. So she resolves this contradiction by telling people that she is Zoroastrian, her religious identity.

> I say we are Zoroastrians. No one's going to know that I'm a Parsi. "What is a Parsi?" …I tell "Z" [her son] that if people ask you, you don't say [Parsi]. I told him when he was younger, say Zoroastrian and some of his teachers who are teaching religion or study religion they know what Zoroastrianism is. (Interview 1, p.14)

Since in the context of the U.S., the Parsi identity is an unknown identity marker, her religious identity, Zoroastrianism, becomes an important identity marker for Persis, because many people are aware of it. She even teaches her son to identify himself as Zoroastrian in K-12 schools. Furthermore, for Persis, she is not just Zoroastrian, she is a" Zoroastrian from India." Her Indian identity is very important to her as well.

> When they ask me more in detail, I say that our ancestors originated from Persia, and we migrated to India and we are Indians now. We are Indian origin. I'm Indian origin. This is about our ancestors. (Interview 1, p. 15)

> So Persis is Persian by ancestry, Indian by origin, Zoroastrian by religion, and Parsi by ethnicity. She is a Zoroastrian from India, who identifies as Indian. The contradiction is maintaining her elite Parsi identity, when hardly anybody in the U.S. knows about the Parsi identity. Persis has resolved this contradiction as well as the contradiction between identifying as American and identifying as Indian by creating a new activity with an evolved motive object "Identifying as Zoroastrian from India" (Figure 5-2). She has learned that she cannot identify as Parsi. People know what a Zoroastrian is in the U.S., but this does not fully explain who she is. She is Indian, but this is still not enough to capture who she is. So she describes herself this way to me:

I'm from India but I'm a Zoroastrian from India. No, I'm Indian, of course. Big time…
(Interview 3, p. 2)

Persis has learned to identify herself as Zoroastrian from India with the accompanying status that

being a Zoroastrian from India (a Parsi) brings.

Conclusion

I used three activity systems: "Identifying as Indian," Identifying as American," and

"Identifying as Parsi" to analyze the racialized experience of Persis. The fourth activity was made

up of the evolved motive-object "Identifying as Zoroastrian from India."

As a light skinned, Indian immigrant from an elite Parsi ethnic religious background that

is highly regarded and respected in India, Persis finds herself in situations where her brother is

being named "brown guy" and her son "Arab" and "Iranian" here in the U.S. For Persis "brown"

is derogatory unlike Prasad's (2000) brown in "brown folk" where it is an inclusive, political term

for SAAs. So why is this term so sensitive for her? She does not want her essence to be reduced

to the color of her skin, her appearance, or her last name which is what racism does – the

stripping away of a person's humanity. She wants to be seen as a whole human being.

Persis' desire to identify as an Indian, as American, and as a Zoroastrian from India are

learned responses to restore different parts of her whole self to herself and her family. Being

Indian is better than being brown. But "Indian" has a history of spiritual and cultural superiority

in the British (Chakrabarty, 2000) and American Orientalist imagination (Prashad, 2000) as well

as the nationalist imagination (Chakrabarty, 2000) that is governed by the unwritten norms that

are clearly understood by the authentic Indian community, such as hailing from the motherland,

speaking your mother tongue, or at least knowing the location of ones' family origin within the

motherland one comes from. Similarly, if you cannot or do not identify as American since
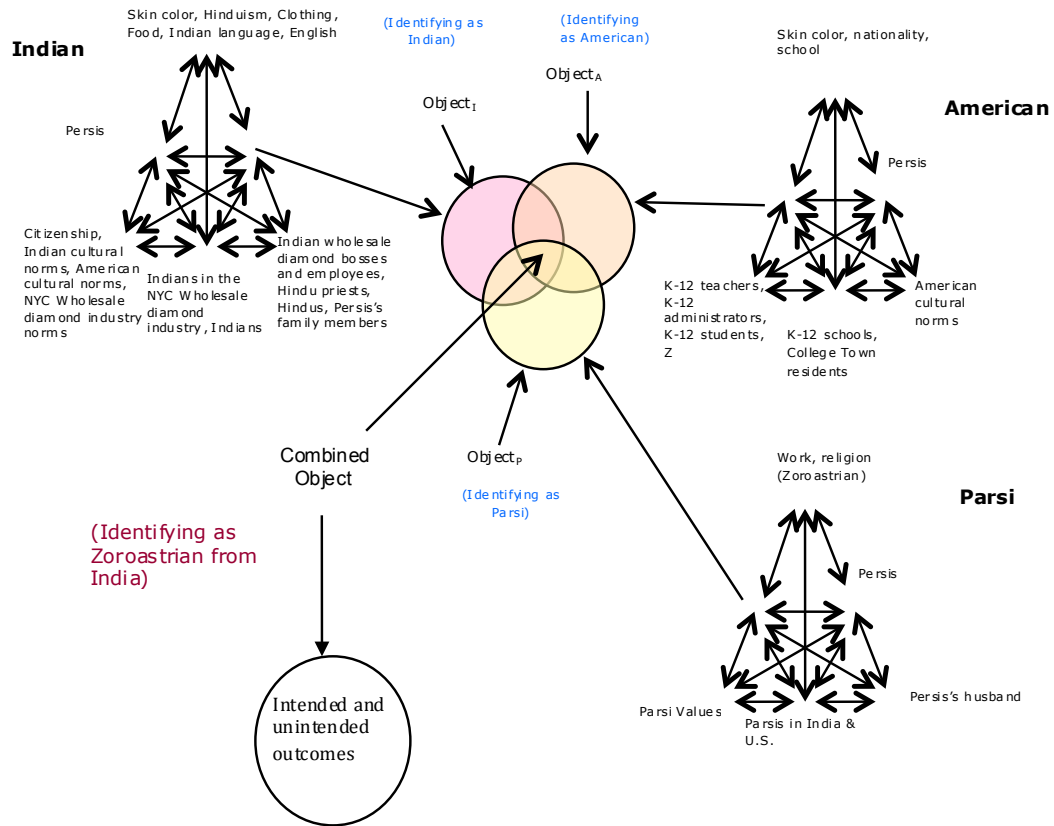
Figure 5-2: Persis' activity network.

American is conflated with white in a predominantly white town, then you learn to identify as

Indian American, a hyphenated identity. It is a hybrid identity, where a person does not have to be

one or another. It could be a challenging space, but for Persis' son, Z, who is now in his 20's, this

 seems to be a better space at this time in his life. Finally, Persis, seems to have resolved the

contradictions in her identification in the U.S. by learning to identify as a Zoroastrian from India.

She is still retaining part of her Indian identity, but she is able to intertwine and interweave her

elite Parsi identity with its accompanying status into this Indian Zoroastrian identity.

Satya

Identifying as American

Wanting to be American, but always Indian

According to Satya, her Indian immigrant parents "did a really good job at assimilating,"

but they are still seen as "always Indian" and not American. So they wanted Satya to assimilate

and be American.

> I think, they (Satya's parents) did a really well at assimilating [sic] ... Because I think my parents struggled with being Indian when they came here. My mom was asked to take her nose ring out when she got a job. So things like that, I think they didn't want my brother and I to face those same things. (Interview 3, p. 17)

Satya's mother had been asked to remove her nose ring at work when she had first immigrated to

the U.S., so she did not want Satya to get one in high school, because she wanted to prevent Satya

from having to face the same cultural struggles.

> And my mom had a nose ring and they asked her to take it out. They told her it was unprofessional and all this stuff. …And I got mine [her nose ring] done in high school and she [Satya's mother] was so against it, because, she was like, "you're going to face problems." I guess like a reminder of what she went through. … But I took it out 'cause I listened to her. I don't want to go to an interview and have it. In my opinion, I felt like it was unprofessional. (Interview 1, pp. 4)

According to Satya, her parents taught her to assimilate because of their experiences. So they

taught Satya to blend in, work hard and be the model minority. Therefore, Satya in this study was

the most consciously assimilated participant from deciding to remove her nose ring to not

speaking Hindi, her mother tongue, in public.

Even now, Satya's parents are seen "as Indian" on the job and this is not an advantage,

but a disadvantage, since this is in juxtaposition to the norm, the American. Even though Satya's

parents immigrated to the U.S. with graduate degrees, Satya's father worked as a cab driver while

her mother worked as a maid in a hotel when they first arrived in the U.S.

> He [her father] was a cab driver, and he came with an engineering degree. … He always tells us he was at gunpoint a few times. People would put guns to his head when he would drive cabs and they would rob the money. So it's kind of like a reminder. Work hard and get an education is so important. And then, my mom was pregnant with my brother, making beds, working in the hotel, with an education too. (Interview 1, p. 4)

In this excerpt, Satya says, "So it's kind of like a reminder. Work hard and get an education is so important." This captures the essence of the model minority thesis which seems to bear fruit for her family because now her parents are middle class, white collar professionals. Their success is only attributed to personal meritocracy and not also to the structural features in place like the Civil Rights Act and the Immigration Act of 1965 (Prashad, 2012).

Even though Satya's mother is currently the director of hospitality for an international U.S. hotel chain, she continues to be seen as not American, *the other* at work, and thus not taken "as seriously at work" by her boss.

> So not very common for Asians, Indians [to be in the hospitality field]. It's not, unless they own it or something, but when it comes to, I guess being a director and working for other people, it becomes a problem where, "Oh, she's from India." And my mom is always like, "It doesn't matter. I may have my education from there, but I've worked here for 20-something years."… She feels like the other directors or her boss doesn't take her as seriously sometimes, because she didn't grow up here, she didn't go to college here. Or, I guess, exposed to the culture, maybe. But my mom is so American. I mean, she doesn't have an accent, so it's not even like the way she dresses or speaks, 'cause that could be, you know? I think it's just, my mom is a very giving person, … and I think they associate that as her being Indian, rather than she's a nice person. …So, I know she's said a few times, to them she's Indian. They don't identify her as being American…. Yes, [she] is always seen as Indian. (Interview 3, pp. 38-39)

According to Satya, her mother says that she is "always seen as Indian," "the forever foreigner" (Prashad, 2000), who is not American even though she does not enact her Indianness. She enacts her Americanness by not wearing Indian clothes and not speaking with an accent, but to no avail. According Satya, her mother could even pass for being Spanish "'cause we're a little bit lighter, so I think our tan skin tone color, like, the olive is a little similar to [Spanish]" (Interview 3, p. 38). Satya's mother is marked as an Indian at work and her Indianness is a disadvantage professionally much like the experience of SAA professionals in Saxenian's study (V. Lal, 2008)

who believe that their professional advancement is "limited by race" (as cited in V. Lal, 2008, p. 60). She is not taken seriously by her boss or the other directors because she did not go to school or grow up in the U.S. In addition, her "niceness" is not seen as a character trait, it becomes an ascribed, inherent, racial quality of being Indian. A quality that is a positive attribute in the hospitality field becomes a racialized negative attribute when it is inherently ascribed to a SAA.

Performance of the American identity: Private/Public

One of the ways that Satya has learned to assimilate into American culture is through her parents' teachings on their racist experiences. Thus, she is American in the public sphere by not enacting her Indianness outside the home and relegating her Indianness to the private sphere, much like the separation of the material and spiritual domain in colonial India (Chatterjee, 1993).

Satya grew up as the only person of color in a Jewish neighborhood, and her parents taught her to "blend" in and assimilate. As she says, "I was never raised to be like, 'You stand out,'" and her enactment of Indianness through speaking Hindi and wearing Indian clothes are kept separate in the home. She and mother speak English in the public sphere.

> I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood. I was the only colored person on my block. And I never thought about those things because my parents were never-, my mom didn't wear Indian clothes on a daily basis. They'd speak to me in English. At home, inside, we'd speak in Hindi but if we're at a grocery store we never-, my mom didn't speak in Hindi to me. (Interview 3, p. 17)

She continues later in the interview:

> My parents always focused on blending us in. Not in a way that we would hide being Indian, but it was like, people shouldn't identify you as that. If you choose to identify yourself as that, that's up to you. (Interview 3, p. 40)

So Satya was not only taught to be American, she learns to be American, and identifies as "pretty American." She enacts her Americanness through quintessential American embodied practices (Ko, 2005), such as cheerleading. As she put it:

I would say I'm pretty American. Like the way my mom raised me and I absolutely love American culture when it comes to dance. That's something that had been part of my life since I was three years old. So to not have a single South Asian person in my dance classes [ballet and hip hop]. And I was on the school dance team, I cheerlead. I did all these things that normal Indians in New York City were not involved in.

Edith: Cheerleading is very American, right?

Very American, yeah. And I think my mom liked that stuff to teach me confidence … for dancing you have to have a lot confidence when you're performing and you're competing. So I think that was her main thing. Not to make me American. (Interview 3, pp. 16-17)

Satya agrees that cheerleading is "very American" and equates Americanness to activities that South Asians are not involved in such as: ballet, hip hop and cheerleading. However, she does emphasize that her participation in these activities are "not to make me American," but they do.

American is a racial identity: American is white

Growing up, Satya's friends were American and for her, white is American; American equates to a white racial identity.

I had a lot of Caucasian friends, lot of American friends. I would call them white. …Or like even just American. (Interview 3, p. 11)

Satya's desired outcome in this activity is to identify as American and Satya does identify as an American. So the outcome of this activity is to identify as an American. She learns to identify as an American through these activities.

One of the unresolved contradictions in this activity is that Satya's mother is not accepted as American at work by the other directors or her boss. She like Satya uses the same mediating tools, speaks English and dresses in American clothes, but she is not white. She is light skinned and gets mistaken as "Spanish." Yet her boss, does not accept her as American. She is a forever foreigner, or here, forever Indian. Here the contradiction is not resolved. Neither is the contradiction resolved when Satya's mother is asked to remove her nose ring, a secondary contradiction between her way of dressing and American cultural norms at work. Satya learns

from her mother's experiences and decides to take her nose ring out because it might be unprofessional. So assimilation is learned behavior and is a response to the context, the need to belong and to identify as American.

Identifying as Hindu

On the other hand, in the private sphere, Satya is an Indian American whose Indian identity is grounded in her religion, Hinduism. She and her father are members of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), which takes the form of the Yankee Hindutva in the U.S. and conflates Hinduism with being Indian (Kurien, 2007; Prashad, 2000). As Satya puts it, "I always say that I don't think being Indian's a-, like being Hindu's really a religion. It's a way of life" (Interview 3, p. 8). So Hinduism is a part of Indian culture, they are intertwined. They cannot be separated for her. She enacts this Indianness growing up by speaking Hindi at home with her parents and her grandfather, wearing Indian clothes for special occasions and for temple sometimes, by attending Hindu temple every Friday, taking Hindi and prayer classes at the temple every Sunday, assisting the priest in the *Langhars* (special prayers*),* and attending Hindu camp in the summers.

As a member of the VHP, Satya attended VHP Camps (also known as Hindu Camp) for about four summers and recalls praying every night together as a camp, learning Indic mythology, e.g. the Mahabharata, and Indian culture. Parents, including her father were the teachers at these camps.

> I'm part of VHP, which is the Vishva Hindu Parishad. It's like the biggest Hindu organization I think in the world. So every summer I think from middle school till sophomore year of high school, my dad would send me to both of them [VHP camps in two different states in the Northeast]. … So we'd have a theme every year, and it was something about India or Indian culture and stuff. So my favorite one was the history of India 'cause you learn about the Partition and the religious aspect of our history. The Mahabharata and stuff. … I learned a lot about my culture…. breakfast wouldn't be Indian food ... But Indian food for lunch, Indian food for dinner. … and we would have *aarthi* [lighting ceremony part of the prayer] every night. So, puja

> [prayer] time. We would pray to the gods together as a camp. And then we'd have our dinner together. Then we'd have a cultural show at the end of the dinner. (Interview 3, pp. 2-4)

Satya not only learned about Hinduism, she also learned about the "religious aspect of history" and Indian culture from a Hindu world view at Hindu camp.

Satya equates Hinduism, Hindi and North India with Indian, and she discloses her reasons for having gone to Hindu camp. Although Satya grew up and attended K-12 schools with quite a few SAA students from the South Indian state of Kerala, she did not consider them Indian because they were not Hindu, Hindi speaking, or North Indian. They were Christian Malayalis who spoke Malayalam, a South Indian language. In fact, Satya attended two different Hindu camps back to back in two different states in the Northeast every summer, because her father knew that she "didn't have any Indian friends," since she did not have anything in common with her Christian South Indian schoolmates.

> I grew up more around Christian Indian kids. More Malayalam, Malayali kids, … so I never really was able to identify because, we were friends but we didn't have common things to talk about. It's not like we would just sit in class and talk about movies, but their culture was a little bit more different, so I guess it was hard to relate…. I would be like, "Oh, I'm going to temple." That was a Friday night. I didn't have anyone to share my misery. (Interview 3, pp. 6-7)

Satya did not feel a connection to them, because she did not watch the same movies (implying here Hindi movies) nor did they attend Hindu temple on Fridays with her. Furthermore, she was confused about their Indianness because her Indian norm consisted of North Indian, Hindi speaking, Hindus or Sikhs like her.

> They'd be the South Indian and we'd be the North. A lot of people would ask us, because they were more, I guess, because we're in the north, more lighter skinned. So people would ask me a lot about that. … So people would always ask what the difference is. It would be awkward conversations because it was hard not [to] say something inappropriate against them. But people are like, "Oh so are they really Indian if they're Christian?" And I'd be like, "Yes, they're Indian." But that's why I always say that I don't think being Indian's like a, being Hindu's really a religion. It's a way of life. So that would be a thing, they'd wear Indian clothes but they don't know a single thing about, Hindi or the language or the culture because they were Christian. So I think that was for me a big struggle to grow up around, because well, they're Indian, but they're not

like me. 'Cause I had no idea [about their] state or their culture -- Kerala until I got into high school. So it was a culture shock in my own culture. You're not Hindu, or even Sikh or, Jain. How are you Indian? (Interview 3, pp. 8-9)

"They don't know a single thing about Hindi or the language or the culture because they were Christian." Here Satya subsumes language, culture, and religion under a "way of life" which she calls Indian. As Christians they did not know anything about her imagination of Indian language or culture even though they wore Indian clothes. Furthermore, the Malayali kids are dark skinned and visible in her school, and her American friends would ask her about the difference in skin color which made for "awkward" conversations for her, especially when she herself is confused about their Indianness.

Indian identities that do not fit into Satya's idea of Indian confuses her and on top of that, she has confusion about how and where she has learned this idea of Indian - from her parents or temple. She does not ascribe it to the VHP or Yankee Hindutva, which has created a hierarchy in which Hinduism is not only dominant and superior to all other religions, but conflates it with being Indian. "At the ideological level, militant Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva… [it], has evolved into a distinct form of fascism that creates an opposition between insiders and outsiders, seeking to assert Hindu religious identity in nationalist and culturalist terms" (Bose, 2008, p. 16). Hindus are the insiders or Indians, and non-Hindus become the outsiders or foreigners who do not belong. This in turn has "communalized the Desi [Indian] polity in the United States" (Prashad, 2000, p. 136) as partially evidenced by Satya's relationships with non-Hindu Indians. Although, Satya seems to have a romanticized view of the VHP and does not know about their communalism, she does discuss with me that as children her father, a VHP member, did not want her and her brother socializing with the Christian Malayali kids.

Challenging the conflation of the Indian racial identity with religion: Malu Johnny

Johnny, Satya's older brother, unlike Satya was oppositional to the Yankee Hindutva construction of Indianness much to their father's displeasure by having had non-Hindu SAA friends, i.e. Christian, Malayali friends in high school. Thus his father nicknamed him "Malu Johnny," or in other words, Malayali Johnny. According to Satya, her "religious" father was upset because Johnny's core group of friends were Christian and South Indian, not Hindu or North Indian (Interview 3, p. 15). He even accused Johnny of having "no pride in being Hindu or Punjabi."

> My dad would always say he's [Johnny] Malayali, 'cause that was his Indian friend circle. So I know it would upset my dad. My dad's a little more religious. Not like that they're bad people, it's just you need to make some North Indian friends so you can have that connection. … I think, my dad, it would upset him a lot that he'd be like, "Johnny, you're like basically Malu"… He's like, "You have no pride in being Hindu or Punjabi, none of that." (Interview 3, p. 15)

Satya's father wanted Johnny to have North Indian friends and implicit in this is that North Indians would be Hindus or Punjabis because these South Indians were Christian. What is ironic is that, Johnny used to go to Catholic school in the elementary grades (K-5). According to Satya, when he was eight or nine years old, he came home from school one day asking for a cross thinking he was a Christian. His parents had to explain to him that he was not Christian, and that he was Hindu and what that meant. This was not only a clear example of how identity is not an inherent essence, but learned, and also that things are not so clear cut. Life is complicated. Satya's dad, a Hindu Nationalist, sent his eldest and only son to Catholic school. This is a contradiction. The parents resolved this contradiction by sending both Johnny and Satya to public school and to Hindu temple to learn about Hinduism.

In this activity, the motive-object is identifying as a Hindu. Satya and her family separate their identities in the public and private sphere: American and Indian/Hindu respectively, which is a retooling of colonial modernity (Chatterjee, 1993) here in the U.S. There are contradictions

between Satya and her brother Johnny. Satya learned from her brother Johnny's experiences. Unlike Johnny, Satya had American friends in K-12 school while nurturing a desire for Hindu, North Indian friends like her whom she names SAA. In other words, she resolves the contradiction by (a) not having non-Hindu SAA friends in K-12 schools and (b) starting a South Asian interest sorority at the university in Summer hoping to meet and have SAA friends just like her (see next section).

Identifying as South Asian American

South Asian interest sorority

Satya founded a national South Asian interest sorority chapter at the university in Summer. According to Satya, the SA sorority is based on South Asian cultural values and the "core principles are sisterhood, society, and remembrance. Sisterhood is who we are, society is who we give to, and remembrance is what lies in our hearts" (Interview 3, p. 42). She founded and joined the sorority to (a) "have a SAA community" and (b) have the all American college fraternity and sorority experience. She explains that she joined a SAA interest sorority and not a mainstream sorority because (a) much like Gallifrey she wanted to be "part of values and people who respect the same things as me" like education and (b) she wanted to be part of an Indian dance team since she had already done American forms of dance in K-12 schools.

> And I think I went for Indian because at the end of the day, that's more important to me. Being part of values and people who respect the same things as me and understand if I can't go party or something, or have to study. I grew up with that, so that was a big defining thing when I was like this is really important to me. And then dancing. Like, when I came to college I was like, you know what, I've done ballet, everything, my whole life. Like, let's just do an Indian dance team. So I think those are the little experiences that made me think more about being Indian and identifying as being Indian. (Interview 3, p. 41)

Being a part of this sorority was not only her attempt to "identify as being Indian," it was also to find the "SAA community" that she had been looking for.

> I felt like I needed that [SAA community] consistently in my life. But, now that I'm in college … I think that's something I'm always to struggle with, because I don't think I'm ever going to find someone who's exactly like me, and that's what I struggle with. One person I did meet through the sorority, Kuljit, one of my sisters, she's a lot like me, but different as in, her parents are very traditional. So then that clashes with mine…. Her mom wears Indian clothes. … She [Kuljit's mother] does speak English but it's not that well. (Interview 3, p. 26)

It is interesting to note that Satya looks for Hindu, North Indian, Hindi speaking friends in an all American institution, sorority life, and is disappointed because she cannot find anyone who is exactly like her. Satya does find a friend who is like her, but whose parents are traditional. To translate, this means that her friend's parents are not assimilated – in terms of clothing and language. Satya uses the tradition/modernity trope by only using the tradition part. It is implicit in her narrative that Americans are modern. This is a contradiction between the different motive-objects – identifying as American and identifying as SAA which she conflates with Hindu. This contradiction is important in this activity system since Satya equates sorority with the American college experience. Satya's aunt (mother's brother's wife) was in a mainstream sorority in college and had a fun American college experience. "She (aunt) did a sorority in college, crazy wild girl" (Interview 1, p. 22). But the SA interest sorority experience does not turn out to be what Satya expected including the SAA friendships and the "all American" experience.

The SA sorority experience seemed to disappoint her socially. She did find SAA friends through the sorority. Because of the small size of the fledging sorority on campus (it only had six members), did not meet the scope and breadth of her expectations. Furthermore, there was animosity between the sorority and the other SAA organizations on campus, so she did not find the "SAA community" that she was seeking. On top of that, Satya felt that the SAAs she met "only wanted to hang out with each other" and she did not want that.

> One thing I've definitely noticed in the South Asian organizations is they only hang out with each other. They only have South Asian friends. Whereas, like me because [of] where I grew up, I don't want to make that my whole life. I want to be tied to it, but I also think I should have a balance. I grew up here, my parents are pretty American in their thoughts. They're not so traditional. My mom doesn't wear Indian clothes. Things like that. And I think, I now have a barrier. I'm a little bit more different than the South Asian community here at the university. (Interview 2, p. 27)

Satya found that she was different from the other SAA students on campus. She found them more traditional or more South Asian and she felt more American. In other words, Satya felt more modern and more open to making American or white friends or SAA friends who were just like her. She wanted SAA friends who were not traditional, open to meeting others besides SAAs, etc.

Sorority life is racialized

Moreover, she does not have the "all American" sorority college experience because their SAA sorority is marginalized by the mainstream sororities. The SA interest sorority is part of the Multicultural Greek Council which is separate from the other mainstream Greek organizations – the Pan-Hellenic (white organizations) and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (African American organizations). Only the *other* groups which are not white or black, i.e. Latino and Asian American, including SA organizations fall under the Multicultural Greek umbrella, thus not seen as mainstream.

> We don't have a lot of mingling, unfortunately. And that's because that goes back to our size numbers. So two main Greek events that happened in the year. In the spring, in the fall we have Greek Sing, which is like a musical the Greeks, fraternities and sororities, put on, but none of the Multicultural are a part of it. They have the option, but because it's such a big time commitment, it's hard, and money, it's difficult for us when our counts are smaller, because we have smaller numbers, to do those things. And then in the spring we have Greek Week, and in my two years of being a sister we've never taken part of it [sic]. And it's so sad because it's such a great week to meet other orgs. And, I know though, one time we were doing Greek Week, this was Spring 2011, and we were paired with one of the biggest IFC fraternities and a very popular sorority, and we were just not even existing to them because we were so small. Or we were, I'm not really sure, it's just, we felt very secluded. We weren't a part of a real Greek organization because we're multicultural. So we stepped out of it because we didn't want it to be an uncomfortable week. (Interview 2, p. 20)

Satya's sorority is a new chapter at the university, so it is small. They do not have the numbers

to participate on an equal footing with the well established mainstream Greek organizations, so

they have been unable to participate in the big Greek events like Greek Sing and Greek Week in

the past few years. Even though multicultural sororities like Satya's "open up the mainstream

sororities which are exclusive," they are still segregated and secluded.

> A lot of Pan-Hellenic organizations are Jewish-based. A lot of fraternities and sororities
> were founded by just Jewish women and men. So multicultural has to do more with the
> Asian fraternities and sororities, the Latin. And then the black historical fraternities and
> sororities are separated themselves. So thinking about it and saying it, I feel it's kind of
> wrong to segregate all of us, but maybe in the future that will change. (Interview 2, p. 19)

Greek life is segregated and showcases racial divisions in U.S. society, the ever present

black/white binary. If you don't fall into those two extreme categories, i.e. black or white, you

become the *other* or the more palatable "multicultural."

To further interrogate the racial tensions in life at the university, I brought up an incident

when the African American sororities at the university made a complaint that they were only

asked to participate in certain events like basketball and stepping by the mainstream white Greek

organizations, a white university employee responded by saying: "Hey, you got to shuck and

jive." This was Satya's response to it:

> We've never experienced-, no one has asked us to do something with them because,
> we're also so new, so not a lot of people outside of our MGC [multicultural greek
> council] know us. Because we're the newest in our council. So I'm not surprised to hear
> that, … because I know for us, the Divine Nine [the African American fraternities and
> sororities] is known for stepping and strolling [form of dance], which is part of their
> fraternity and sorority life. So I could see someone asking them…. I think it's how you
> look at it. To me I wouldn't read twice into, and I think that's just because I think it's like
> a compliment. I think they're phenomenal steppers and dancers. But I can see them
> looking at it in a different perspective, because, everyone takes something differently.
> But I know if someone asked me to dance because we're a South Asian thing, I don't
> think I would be offended-
>
> Edith: What if that was the only thing they wanted you to do all the time?
>
> I can understand that, then. But I also think there's a lot of politics in Greek life, because
> I think you do need members to execute things. (Interview 2, pp. 22-23)

Satya's first reaction is that African American organizations are reading too much into it but later

concedes that it is a problem, "politics in Greek life," not racism. This epitomizes the

hardworking, non-trouble maker, the good minority, otherwise known as the model minority

image of SAAs.

Disrupting the model minority thesis: Domestic violence

However, Satya is passionate about disrupting a different model minority characteristic –

domestic violence in the private sphere through her sorority's philanthropy. Every sorority has a

philanthropy and her sorority's philanthropy is domestic violence in order to focus on

empowering South Asian women and giving them a voice.

> Our national philanthropy is domestic violence, and that's because that's very common,
> unfortunately, in South Asian cultures. The point of, [name of SA interest sorority] was
> founded was, they wanted to give a voice to South Asian women. Which they felt their
> own mothers and women in their lives did not have that. So they wanted to break barriers.
> …There's a few South Asian sororities, but we're the only one that focuses on South
> Asian principles like helping women and helping us advance. So we do a lot of work in
> domestic violence. (Interview 2, pp. 6-7)

Satya's own passion comes for the cause from her "own home life" – the emotional abuse at

home. She did it for her for her mother who lived and is still living with emotional abuse at home.

> Kind of in my own home life, but not so much physical. More emotional. My parents
> didn't have a good marriage. … And it wasn't even like clashing on how to raise my
> brother and I. 'Cause that's the best part about them. I think they would be happier
> separated, maybe. But, we make them happy, so why would they want to lose raising
> both Johnny and me together. I remember them fighting constantly growing up. I mean it
> was pretty rough. Never really, never physical, I'd say, but definitely emotional. I
> remember always crying, and I remember my mom would have to-, we'd leave the house
> and, we'd go with her and we'd go to my grandpa's house in the city. … 'Cause they
> were always, always fighting. …But, it was rough growing up, but it never affected my
> schoolwork. My parents were all about school, made sure I had every opportunity, let me
> get involved. … Emotionally it was tough. It still is when they fight and don't talk to
> each other for a few days. And then they get over it. They go on vacations together now.
> … And I think that's what makes my mom open to dating and to American culture.
> (Interview 3, pp. 43-45)

Satya is a product of domestic violence and is committed to making a change. Even as she talks

about the emotional abuse at home, she still mentions the model minority characteristics of a

SAA home – the focus on education and family values of keeping the family together. This is a

contradiction of maintaining the image of a model family and model racial group by hiding the

violence at home, a structural problem amongst SAAs (Bhattacharjee, 1992). The other

contradiction is the juxtaposition to identifying as American – dating and American culture, the

modern and progressive as opposed to the repressive and traditional Indian culture.

Through her sorority's philanthropic work with domestic violence, Satya and her sorority

are trying to give women like her mother a voice and trying to expose something that is kept

hidden in the private or domestic sphere (Pateman, 2006) of SAA life in the U.S. As

Bhattacharjee (1992) argues, hiding domestic violence in the SAA community portrays a

particular nationalist image of SAAs as embodying the American ideals of family values. Thus

the philanthropic work done by Satya and her sorority makes the problem of domestic violence

among SAAs visible, thus disrupting the model minority label given by dominant society and

taken on by SAAs. As Abraham (2006) argues, "issues such as marital violence lay unaddressed

by the mainstream segments of the [SAA] community because they did not fit into the concept of

the "model minority" or the happy harmonious South Asian home" (p. 202). Moreover, this

philanthropic work with domestic violence is also bridging and melding Satya's private (Indian

nationalist) and public (American) identities together in a third space.

Satya founded the South Asian interest sorority to find other SAA friends like her, but

ends up disappointed in her social life, since her conceptualization of SAAs is a contradiction.

Satya's motive-object in this activity is to identity as SAA, an evolved motive-object from

identifying as Hindu and American. However, this activity for Satya is full of contradictions.

Satya does not get along with members of the other South Asian organizations and according to

Satya, the sorority as an organization has problems with the other South Asian organizations on

campus. One of the other contradictions of being a member of a SA sorority is that Satya is identified as a South Asian sorority member, not a mainstream sorority member. So in the context of belonging to an all American institution of sorority life, Satya is secluded and segregated. There is no resolution to this contradiction. This is also a contradiction of the motive-object of identifying as American. This is why Satya has a problem with the other members of the SA organizations who only want to socialize with each other while Satya wants to socialize with Americans as well. She wants to be both South Asian and American,, not just one - a South Asian. For her, the SAA identity is a social and political identity (Prashad, 2012).

Conclusion

I used three activity systems: Identifying as American, Identifying as Hindu, and Identifying as SAA to analyze Satya's racialized experience. The identifying as SAA activity system is made up of the motive-object identifying as SAA. Although Satya is still struggling with her different identities at this point in her life, the SAA is a hybrid identity which melds her American and Hindu identity together.

Satya had distinct and separate identities growing up – Hindu in the private sphere and American in the public sphere. She learned these identities through her daily activities that her parents engaged her in and taught her through. For example, she learned to identify as Hindu by attending Hindu Camp. Moreover, for Satya, her Hindu identity equates to an Indian identity, not a SAA identity. Hinduism for her is "a way of life,' not a religion, so Hinduism is equated with Indian, her racial identity. On the other hand, American is equated with white and thus for Satya, it is equated with her performance of race – speaking English, doing ballet, cheerleading, and not speaking Hindi, not wearing Indian clothes, not doing puja, etc. in the public sphere. Race

SAA

Race, Domestic Violence, Greek events

Satya

(Identifying as SAA)

(Identifying as Hindu)

Object$_A$

Object$_I$

Hinduism, Hindu camp, Language, Region

Hindu

Satya

IFC rules, model minority conventions, VHP ideology

SA interest sorority at State University & nationally, SAA organizations at State University

SA interest sorority sisters, SA organization members, family members

VHP members, friends, Satya's family members

VHP

American cultural norms

Combined Object

Object$_B$

(Identifying as American)

(Identifying as SAA)

Skin color, Language, Clothes

American

Satya

Intended and unintended outcomes

Hindu Nationalist ideology

K-12 schools, neighborhood, American hospitality industry?

White friends, Boss, Neighbors

Figure 5-3: Satya's activity network.

becomes meaningful to Satya through family, school, and religion much of which she learns through her interactions with her family.

Domestic violence is a theme in her narrative. She grew up in a home with domestic violence and as a 21-year old college student decided to tackle it as a social issue for women like her mother. Not for women like her! She is daring to make it public even though SAAs keep it hidden (Abraham, 2000; Bhattacharjee, 1992) to maintain their model minority status. Satya has been taught and has learned to be a model minority from her parents, but she is breaking away from this identity. Social justice seems to take precedence over her model minority status, and similarly the SAA social and political identity seem to take primacy over the Indian identity.

Gnana

Belonging: Wanting to be accepted

Perpetual outsiders: Mahajar/forever foreigner

Gnana compares and contrasts her parents' migration and lived experience in Pakistan to

her migration and lived experience here in the U.S. with a common theme emerging: both are

mahajars, people who do not belong and are discriminated against. According to Gnana, "I could

be considered a mahajar here [U.S.], while my parents were considered mahajars in Pakistan"

(Interview 4, p. 2). Gnana defines mahajar as "a refugee, or migrant... It does not relate to any

race. It does not relate to a religion" (Interview 4, p. 2). Mahajar or Muhajir in the context of

Pakistan does relate to religion, to Islam, since it is a political term used to refer to Muslims from

India who migrated to Pakistan after the Partition of India in 1947 when Pakistan was created as

the homeland for Muslims (Dass, 2002).

Gnana's parents with their five children along with her father's family, except for one

brother, moved to Karachi, Pakistan from India post-Partition. Gnana's mother's family decided

to stay in India. Gnana pointed out that her parents moved for professional and personal safety

reasons much like her and her husband's reasons for moving to the U.S. Her parents moved "for

professional reasons" because her father was offered a job in newly created Pakistan post-

Partition, and for "safety reasons" concerning their young children due to violence against

Muslims in North India (the family lived in Calcutta).

> To the best of my knowledge, my parents moved here [Pakistan], for them it was a
> professional decision. It had nothing to do with their loyalties to one country or another.
> My father knew that there was a job here [Pakistan] for him and that there may not be one
> for him in India, and so he chose to come here. To come to Pakistan. There may have
> been the perceived sense of security in moving to Pakistan, 'cause, Pakistan was created
> as a safe haven for Muslims, getting them out of India. And so there might have been
> that. I don't know if that played a factor in that as well. (Interview 3, p. 4)

She further clarified the notion of Pakistan being a safe haven for the family later in interview 3:

> They [Gnana's parents] probably felt that it would be safer for them to leave India, because they had young children, and the way Muslims were being slaughtered in India at the time, it was just not a safe place for a Muslim to be. And so I think, sense of security, probably was something they were looking for. (Interview 3, p. 11)

This parallels Gnana's migration to the U.S. because (a) her husband got a faculty position at the university and (b) Karachi did not seem a safe place to work or raise kids.

> Strictly speaking, that was the impetus for my husband and I to move back to [sic] Summer because when we went back [to Pakistan from Summer] with two infants. And my husband was the department head in the [name of field] school and that's when a lot of the student unrest was starting in the mid '80s in the educational institutions, and it was looking like it was not going to be a safe place for him or a safe place to raise kids. And because we were in Karachi which is 15 million people. And so when the opportunity presented itself to move back to Summer, which at the time, 24 years ago, was a third of the size it is now, it seemed very attractive. (Interview 3, p. 4)

So although both Gnana and her parents migrated for professional and safety reasons, and found physical safety, they did not find a sense of belonging. They were always "mahajars" who "faced constant discrimination from those who were native to the region and did not need to migrate" (Dass, 2002, p. 207). For example, according to Gnana, her parents and family were never quite accepted in Karachi by the people who were already living there much like Gnana and her family here in Summer.

> They [Gnana's family] were never quite accepted [in Pakistan] because there were people already living in that part of the world, the Sindhis or the Hans or the Punjabis or whatever, and the Urdu-speaking people came in, they were more educated, they started to establish the businesses and, started to take over the government and commerce and, there was a lot of resistance. And so at every step they were looked upon as outsiders who were encroaching on the rights of the natives. And, so I guess I kind of grew up being in that position. And, so being here [U.S.] was no different for me. It was really the same. I'd seen it, I'd experienced it, now, I'd lived with it. And, I think our children, however, saw it from a very different perspective, because for them it was, what they were experiencing was not something that they had expected. So, there's that difference between my generation and their generation. (Interview 3, p. 5)

Gnana's parents were Urdu speaking and they did not speak Sindhi, the regional language of Karachi. Gnana explained that they did not make any attempt to learn it when they moved to

Karachi, because they wanted to preserve their langue and culture. They did not have to, since

Urdu, the language they spoke was the national language of Pakistan. Second, they were highly

educated, a defining characteristic of the mahajars (Dass, 2002). To illustrate, her father had a

PhD from a prominent university in the U.S. and the family had social capital. They were not

accepted and were seen as "outsiders who were encroaching on the rights of the natives." They

were not seen or accepted as natives; they were perceived as forever foreigners (Prashad, 2000) or

mahajars. This brought up the native/foreigner trope and the question who was the native and

who was the foreigner. Muslims were located as foreigners in India in the colonial and Hindu

nationalist discourses pre-and post independence (Thapar, 1989, 2005), and when the Muslims

from India moved to Pakistan to a 'safe haven' created for them post-Partition, they once again

became foreigners. Even though Gnana's parents were non-religious and non-practicing Muslims,

according to Gnana, they left India due to the threat of violence against Muslims, but they once

again became the perceived foreigners who faced the same cycle of native/foreigner politics of

non-belonging in Pakistan.

This cycle of non-belongingness continues for Gnana in the U.S. As a mahajar from

Pakistan, she expected to be 'not accepted' in the U.S. She was not seen as a native of Pakistan

even though she was born there, so she did not expect to be accepted here in the U.S. as an

immigrant. However, this was not the case with her sons. They were born in the U.S. and

according to Gnana, they expected to be accepted as Americans. This difference in expectations

or politics of non-belonging according to her was a generational difference.

Not Bumiputra (sons of the soil)

None of them, Gnana or her sons, are "bumiputra," or "sons of the soil" according to

Gnana, in other words, indigenous. Bumiputra refers to the Malay population in Malaysia which

is considered indigenous to the country and thus granted "special rights" (economic and political; Abuza, 2002, p. 375) in society through the constitution (Abuza, 2002) in contrast to the non-indigenous Chinese, Indian and other populations. While growing up, Gnana lived in Malaysia with her parents for a few years, so there is an intentionality in her use of the term bumiputra in reference to her and her family's status in Pakistan and the U.S. In Gnana's usage, bumiputra does not equate to indigenous, it seems to equate to the dominant. Therefore, the bumiputra status in the U.S. is conferred to the whites, the dominant group in society. The Indian immigrants in Pakistan, the mahajars, were not the bumiputras there either. Therefore, although Gnana was born in Pakistan and her sons in the U.S., they are not treated as bumiputra, they are treated differently as compared to the dominant group. Gnana is considered an outsider or foreigner in Pakistan on the basis of migration, class, and culture while her sons are considered outsiders or foreigners in the U.S. on the basis of language and skin color.

> So living in Pakistan, you're not bumiputras. Even though I was born there [Karachi, Pakistan]. Which is very similar to my sons' situation. Even though they were born here [Summer, U.S.], they're not "sons of the soil" because they speak a different language, they're a different color. The only difference was that growing up, we [Gnana and her family in Pakistan] didn't actually adopt the culture, the language. The language and the culture and the values of the ancestors were very sacred for my family. And, so we lived in a very protected, in terms of values and language and culture, environment, and grew up in that. And part of that was how we survived, the survival instinct. That is, we knew, so there was no effort to assimilate. Whereas in my sons' situation there was none of that. Even though at home we spoke the language [Urdu] with them, we ate foods, they kind of straddled the two cultures. And obviously because there isn't another language besides English here, they grew up speaking the language, and eventually that became their first language of choice. Whereas I spent my entire time in Pakistan was spent in Sindh, but I don't speak Sindhi. So that's the difference. (Interview 3, pp. 8-9)

Gnana and her parents' non-belonging or foreignness in Pakistan as Gnana points out was not on the basis of race or religion, it is on the basis of perceived educational, professional, and political dominance in addition to their language, class, and culture. In order to survive, they chose not to assimilate by not learning the local language as well as not partaking in the culture. They chose instead to preserve their own ancestry and culture.

Similarly, like Gnana who was not seen as a bumiputra even though she was born in Pakistan, her U.S.-born sons are not accepted as "sons of the soil" in the U.S. even though they "straddled the two cultures," "because they speak a different language and they're a different color." In other words, race. This translates to Gnana and her parents being mahajars or forever foreigners (Prashad, 2000) in Pakistan because of their culture and ancestry and Gnana and her sons being forever foreigners in the U.S. because of their skin color. This politics of non-belonging based on skin color according to Gnana has shaped her life in the U.S. from her decision to become a citizen to her and her sons' daily lives. Gnana equates skin color to belongingness.

Being an outsider on the basis of skin color and appearance in the U.S. is a recurring theme in Gnana's racialized narratives. She speaks about mainstream Americans pigeon-holing her by inferring that she does not belong solely on the basis of her skin color.

> Your skin color is just the first thing that people see and it's right in your face. You can't do anything about it so immediately, they pigeon-hole you. Okay, you do not belong. Now, my curiosity is, so if you don't belong here, where do you belong, and then they want to know, where do you belong? (Interview 1, p. 20)

Although she has been living in the U.S. since the early 1980s, more than 30 years, she raises a few poignant questions: (a) who belongs in America – only whites?, (b) if Gnana does not belong here, where does she belong?, (c) does she have to answer question (b)?, and (d) what happens if she does not answer (b) satisfactorily? Unfortunately, Gnana and her sons have had to tackle the last two questions which are discussed later in the section entitled "Identifying as American."

These actions are part of the larger activity system entitled Wanting to be Accepted (Figure 5-3). The motive-object of this activity is belonging. The mediating tools when discussing the politics of belonging as a mahajar in the context of Pakistan are religion, country of birth, language, and education. There is a contradiction between rules and the community. Gnana's parents, well-educated, Urdu speaking, Muslim Indians move to Sindhi speaking Karachi post-

Partition are not accepted. They make no effort to assimilate to the local culture in Pakistan. The

motive-object is to belong to Pakistan, and the unintentional outcome of non-assimilation is non-

belonging. This is in contrast to the U.S. context. Gnana and her sons have made efforts to

assimilate. Her family speaks English and English is even "their first language choice" for

Gnana's sons. In fact, "they kind of straddled the two cultures." But they are still not accepted.

This is also a contradiction between rules and the community. Mainstream American community

does not accept them as Americans on the basis of their skin color and appearance. Accepted

American cultural norms in areas like Summer dictate that Americans are white, so if you are not

white, you are not American. Skin color is being equated to nationality, not white being equated

to not American. Furthermore, Gnana demonstrates a poignant yearning to belong, when she asks

"so if you don't belong here, where do you belong?"

Politics of belonging: Joining community organizations to belong

Gnana responds to not belonging by being very involved in the community at Summer

and by being the lone voice speaking up when others do not about the lack of representation of

non-whites in community organizations.

> I do a lot of community work. I sit on boards in the community. I'm very actively
> engaged in what's happening in the community. I am accepted for what I bring to the
> table, but I feel like my role, and it's a difficult role to take on, but I feel, constantly that
> my role is to point out to people, what they are missing out on, where they are being
> exclusive. I sit on the state board for [Name of state in the NE where the interviews took
> place] for [Name of organization]. … I find myself saying this in every group that I'm in
> … I addressed the president and I said, "I'm going to say something very difficult and
> which is there are 20 women around this table and I'm the darkest skinned person. Do
> you really feel you represent the community? You don't. You're not representing your
> constituents and what are you doing about it?" So that's kind of the role I've taken on. Is
> making people aware of what it is that they are doing. And a lot of these people are doing
> it unconsciously. When I say these things to them, the light bulb goes on and they realize
> and understand that, yes, we need to do something about it. But until I say it, they're
> complacent, or they're happy with the way things are and they don't see it. (Interview 1,
> p. 11)

When I asked her how she ended up in this role, this is what she said:

> Reflecting back on it, it was survival instinct. I had to survive. And the only way to do that was, take on the responsibility or role, that nobody else was taking on. And I know that because of that, there are groups where I would not be welcome, but that's okay. But then there are other groups that are happy that somebody's pointed that out to them, and they're willing to do something about it. So, it's not an easy role to take on. (Interview 1, p. 12)

She uses her identity as the non-white, the dark skinned person, or the *other* to gain acceptance into the community by pointing out the exclusion of others like her. She points out that this is a difficult role, but one that she to needs to play in order to survive, a recurring theme in Gnana's narratives. Her parents chose not to assimilate into the local culture in Pakistan, but she chooses to engage in community activities to include non-whites in predominantly white organizations in order to survive in the U.S. She points out that the exclusion of others is unconscious on the part of the white leaders and members of the various organizations (McIntosh, 1988), but inclusion of others is very much conscious on Gnana's part. She illustrates this by giving this concrete example when "Organization X," was looking for a board member and completely overlooked an African banker until Gnana brought his existence to their attention. She describes this as a case of the predominantly white female board members staying within their comfort zones of race and gender, thus overlooking a potential African male candidate until she, as the *othe*r, made them aware of him as a possible board member.

> Well, in "Organization X," for instance, as soon as they recruited me for the board, they also gave me a responsibility to chair the board development committee, and part of the charge of the board development committee was to recruit new board members. And, I don't think anybody had ever said this to them, but I told them that they were all white women and maybe two men. But that they do not represent the community that they're working in, and they need diversity. And so, of the three people that we recruited, one was from Africa, a male from Africa, and the other one was an African-American woman from Philadelphia. Well, the interesting thing that happened was the male from Africa, he's a banker here actually in town, people had known him before. But the interesting part is that even though they knew him they'd never thought of him as a board member. … the thought had never occurred to them before. … So I've become very keenly aware of those issues, and I try to point them out in a nice way. I don't want to make people feel like they're doing something wrong, but it's just that they're just taking things for granted and just happily moving right along not even realizing what they're doing. That what

they say and do and the people they bring on board, it's all people like me. And they don't go out of their comfort level. So it's, three white women, when they go to recruit a board member they gravitated towards a white woman. (Interview 3, p. 31)

Gnana implies in both the narratives above that race operates in unconscious and unintentional ways to exclude *others*, the definition of racism according to Goldberg (2009), which result in structural exclusion. Gnana has taken it as her responsibility to undo this exclusion.

The mediating tool in these actions is skin color. The secondary contradiction is between the operating procedures of community organizations and the white leadership of the community organizations who decide and implement them. Here it is a selection process concerning the face of the organization, in other words, about selecting and deciding on the leadership of the organization. The community-based organizations that Gnana has leadership positions in seem to be predominantly white-led organizations whose white leadership tend to unconsciously or unintentionally select other whites for leadership positions, such as board members. Gnana is not only changing the conditions of the selection process by having them recognize this egregious behavior, but also by helping them recognize, identify, and choose qualified non-whites for these positions. I would argue that by having Gnana as a board member in Organization X, this contradiction is being resolved by hiring diverse board members like the male African and the female African American board members. This has led to learning and transformation of Organization X. Gnana herself has met her desired outcome of belonging through these actions. Furthermore, she has resolved the contradiction between the mediating artifact, skin color and the community made up of the community-based organizations by making a place for herself in her hometown, Summer through her work in these organizations. Thus, she has learned how to get herself accepted by making a niche for herself. Learning happened here by taking the mediating tool of skin color which makes her an outsider in the U.S., an asset within these organizations.

Identifying as American

The second activity system, Identifying as American (Figure 5-3), with its motive-object and desired outcome to identify as an American is made up of actions that are a response to the first activity Wanting to be accepted. The actions that make up this activity are (a) Gnana becoming an American citizen even though she knows that she will not be accepted as an American on the basis of her skin color, (b) Gnana's recurring encounters with strangers who want to know where she is *really* from because of the color of her skin, (c) Gnana claiming an American identity as an intentional and conscious response to people telling her that she does not belong, and (d) Gnana's reactions to mainstream Americans in Summer for denying her American born sons their American identity. These actions speak to the politics of representation of who is an American and who is not as well as who decides who is an American on the basis of which mediating tools and rules.

What makes you an American?: Conflating white with American

Within the first fifteen minutes of my first 'get to know you' interview with Gnana, she addressed the emotional dilemmas of changing her immigration status from permanent residency to American citizenship. She did not want to change her citizenship for two reasons: (a) her connection to Pakistan and (b) her knowledge that she and her husband "will never be accepted here," as Americans because of their skin color.

> There were two things: one was, we [Gnana and her husband] still felt that, we owe something back to the community that, it didn't have to be called Pakistan, it was just the community that supported us, as we were growing up. We both had family there. The other was, that we knew that, we will never be accepted here. That, we can't change the color of our skin. And that's a very, very important, barrier, and so do we really want to do this and take on that challenge…. Yeah, so that was the other thing. Do we really want to do this because we know on paper we'll be US citizens but we won't be accepted as Americans so, once we got to terms with that- Yes, that is a reality, we have to accept it. Then it was okay. Then we were able to proceed with it. (Interview 1, pp. 7-8)

Although as a mahajar, Gnana felt like she did not belong in Pakistan, yet she still felt a strong

connection to Pakistan when it came to getting a U.S. citizenship. This feeling of belonging and

not belonging to Pakistan is a contradiction. Furthermore, Gnana knew the contradiction that she

and her husband would be facing even with a U.S. citizenship - the dilemma of being an

American on paper, but not in everyday life. Since she had been living in this country for many

years, she knew what she, her husband and her children had been dealing with, would continue to

deal with, and did not know if she wanted to take on that additional challenge of the non-

bumiputra status in the U.S. with the American citizenship. Legally, a person with an American

citizenship is an American, however, this was not Gnana's perception or understanding of being

an American. For her, someone who looked like her would not be accepted as American. She

clarified what she meant by someone like her and how she is not accepted as not American in the

excerpt below:

> It really has to do with the color of your skin. When I go to a conference and people see
> my name badge or honestly speaking, they see the color of my skin and before I've even
> opened my mouth, they will come up to me and say, "Hi, I'm so and so, where are you
> from?" and I say [Name of region in northeastern state,] and they say, "But really, where
> are you from?" And I say [Name of region in northeastern state] and sometimes they get
> upset, because they think I'm pulling their leg. Sometimes they are intrigued by what I'm
> saying to them, but rarely has anybody actually accepted that and that I'm from [Name of
> region in northeastern state]. Now, a fair skinned person could say that and it would be
> perfectly acceptable. (Interview 1, p. 8)

As Gnana points out, if a white person (for Gnana, fair skinned equates to white) claimed to be

American, that identity would not be questioned. It would be accepted. In other words, white is

conflated with American. So, not only do people question Gnana on where she is from, they also

get upset when they do not like her response that she is American.

Gnana recounts these narratives of non-belonging and "where are you from" as

commonplace in the daily lives of her American-born and raised sons as well, even though they

have lived in Summer, U.S. all their lives, except for the 14 months that they spent in Karachi

when they were between 10 months to 2 years old. This is another recurring theme in the

narratives: both the racism exhibited by the questioner positioning Gnana and her sons as "forever foreigners" by conflating white with American and the ensuing anger on the part of the questioner when this racist assumption is resisted and pushed back by Gnana and her sons as they claim to be American, thereby belonging to the U.S. These narratives range from the ubiquitous incidents at the workplace that wear away on a person to the harsh reality of overt racist acts that can cause psychological, mental, and physical damage. For example, one of these incidents occurred when a disgruntled library patron angrily stomped away from one of Gnana's sons, because the patron did not like her son's response that he is American. Another incident occurred when the harsh reality of racism raised its ugly head after a teacher asked if Gnana's sons could be removed from high school in the aftermath of 9/11 because of the threats that were made against them by their "fellow Americans." This does not seem to be much different from the racism faced by SAAs historically (Chandrasekhar, 1982b; Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989).

Gnana uses a run-in that one of her sons had with a patron at the public library where he was employed to illustrate that "A person on the street does not accept them as an American."

> I mean there are hundreds of examples I could give you but this is the most recent one, which happened last year. He worked at the library downtown … and this one day he came home and …he said, "This patron walked up to him and said, "Where are you from?" and he said, "Summer," and she said, "Where did you grow up?" and he said "Summer," and she said, "Where were you born?" and he said "Summer," and he said, "She turned around and stomped away," because, she thought he was pulling her leg and he was lying and he said, "If she had said to me, where are your parents from, I might have told her, but I did not lie to her." … And, my sons believe and are convinced and, rightly so, that they are Americans. …This is home for them. But they're not accepted here. A person on the street does not accept them as an American. (Interview 1, pp. 8-9)

Gnana believes that her sons are not accepted in the U.S. because of their skin color and appearance. Gnana's sons are Americans by birth, residency, and citizenship, but in a world where belongingness is equated with skin color, their skin color denies them their nationality. That is why Gnana has to say, "my sons believe and are convinced and, and, rightly so, that they are Americans."

Whereas Gnana almost seems to have a fatalistic expectation about the politics of non-belonging and the lack of acceptance in the U.S. because of her experience as a mahajar, her American born and raised sons according to her do not expect it, nor do they accept it. The sons do not accept the contradiction between skin color and citizenship and seem to have resolved this contradiction in their 20s, but this conflation of white and American had very real consequences for her sons in the aftermath of 9/11 in 2001 when they were in 9th grade. According to Gnana, the aftermath of 9/11 was a difficult and painful time for them, especially when their enrichment teacher called and said, "You need to get them out of the school, they don't belong here."

> In 9th grade, and that's when the war was starting, and, when [their] enrichment teacher called and said, "You need to get them out of this school, they don't belong here." They were ready to drop out of high school because they were so ostracized and marginalized [but], they both went to Cornell and they got their undergraduate degrees and one of them graduated Summa Cum Laude and is in a PhD program right now. So, these children could have been high school dropouts because of the racism they experienced in high school but, they survived …They never really actually gave us details, but, when we talked with them about it. …I'm trying to remember exactly what he said. "You don't know what it's like to eat lunch by yourself in a cafeteria full of other students," and then we got them out of that school. Sent them to the alternative school. (Interview 1, pp. 14-15)

When I asked for clarification on what the Enrichment teacher meant, this what Gnana had to say about it:

> I think what she might have been saying was, that's not a friendly, accepting environment for them and, if you care about these children's social and intellectual growth; you need to put them in an environment that's friendly to them, at least. Where they feel comfortable, they don't feel threatened. Where maybe every second person is not telling them to go home. (Interview 4, p. 10)

According to Gnana, school had become a site of racialization and racism for her sons, where not only were they threatened but they were not offered much protection by the school authorities as evidenced by the narrative above. As the mother of these sons, the school had become a site of racialization and racism for Gnana as well. For her, this predominantly white school in a white, conservative area of the U.S. had become a hostile place for her two sons who are of Pakistani origin. What is clear is the post-9/11 ideology and how it had affected these 9th graders and how it

was allowed to affect them instead of protecting them by their high school administrators and

teachers. There are so many contradictions here: The contradiction between skin color and the

white, conservative school; skin color and the post-9/11 ideology; the contradiction within

division of labor between the students and the teachers and administrators. None of these

contradictions were resolved during that time, because Gnana's sons were asked to be removed

from that school for their personal safety and well-being. Gnana resolved the contradiction by

placing them in an alternative school. Hence, two potential high school drop outs are college

graduates with one currently pursuing a Ph.D. By resolving the contradiction this way, Gnana

learned that structurally her sons could not identify as Americans immediately after September

11, 2001. This is the unintentional outcome of the activity.

Additionally, according to Gnana, this conflation of skin color with nationality, i.e. white

with American, translated to her sons being treated like cultural outsiders when they critiqued

government policies (McIntosh, 1997, p. 294), like when they criticized Bush and the war after

9/11 and were told "Go back to where you came from."

> It's the color of their skin. They don't consider themselves white. They are American but
> somebody said to my sons, one of my sons' face, when he raised his voice against the
> war, or one of the Bush policies, "Go back to where you came from," and he said, "You
> better be native American." … they [Gnana's sons] feel that they have every right to
> criticize the US government, the policies. But they have the white person sitting next to
> them, saying you're criticizing because you don't belong here. (Interview 1, pp. 17-18)

Once again, skin color is being conflated with nationality and the ensuing politics of

representation, i.e. who can speak and who cannot. In other words, here in the case of Gnana's

son, first, he is not white and second, he is not expressing a pro-establishment perspective in the

aftermath of 9/11. Hence, he is facing a double jeopardy – he is not considered American on the

basis of his skin color and his non-American views, so he can not criticize or speak and he *has* to

"go back to where you came from." Basically, he does not belong. That is why according to

Gnana, "they have the white person sitting next to them, saying you're criticizing because you

don't belong here." Here, the interlocutor is white, since the dominant group in the U.S. is white

and historically, whites are seen as Americans while other groups are not, including SAAs. This

brings in white privilege as well and the right to "criticize the government" and "without being

seen as a cultural outsider" (McIntosh, 1997, p. 294). Her son's response of "you better be Native

American" to "go back to where you came from" is a direct response and critique of white

privilege which exacerbates their non-belongingness, and confronts the issue of who belongs and

who does not.

The motive-object to identify as American is a response to wanting to be accepted in the

U.S., but it does not seem to have resolved the contradiction of wanting to be accepted. The

contradiction between skin color and American cultural norms from Gnana's subjectivity seem

entrenched and immutable. Skin color determines who belongs and who does not in the U.S.:

white is American and non-white is not American. Gnana and her sons are not white, so they do

not belong, they are not American. They are non-white in a white Summer located in the midst of

a white rural area. In this conceptualization, skin color is conflated with nationality which leads to

racism against Gnana and her sons that is nagging, constantly questioning their identity and trying

to silence their voices.

To both combat people's insistence that Gnana does not belong in the U.S. and the

invariable "where do you belong" question, she intentionally claims a particular regional

American identity. She does it "to get a reaction out of people" and although "she thoroughly

enjoys" it, it is sad as well when she states, "I'm not lying, you know? I've spent more years of

my life here than anyplace else."

> They want to know, where do you belong, and that's why I've adopted this I'm from
> [Name of county], [name of region]. Which I do it to get a reaction out of people now
> and I thoroughly enjoy it but at the same time, I'm not lying, you know? I've spent more
> years of my life here than anyplace else. (Interview 1, p. 20)

Identifying as South Asian American

Gnana's third activity system is Identifying as South Asian American. SAA is a complex
and complicated identity for Gnana. In the first interviews with Gnana, she says that she does not
identify herself racially and that "it is not possible to define oneself racially" although she had
identified herself as South Asian American to be a participant in the study. As I probe further, she
states that she uses SAA "if I have to fill out a form and I have to identify myself as something."

> If I have to fill out a form and I have to identify myself as something, I would say I'm a
> South Asian American because I have to check off something. What that means, I don't
> know. I really don't know. I know that many people have probably said this, but I grew
> up with the concept of, "I'm a citizen of the world." So those artificial boundaries and
> labels don't mean anything to me. (Interview 3, p. 12)

In this narrative, Gnana says that race is meaningless to her. This could be because of her
family's diasporic experience. Her ancestry is Persian on both her father and mother's side, but
her family tree can also be traced to Afghanistan, different parts of Pakistan besides Urdu
speaking Pakistan and India.

> I don't think it's possible to do that [to define oneself racially]. It's just I think, like you
> said, in situations where somebody from generations had been living in one place, they
> could maybe say they are X, Y, Z. But, when people say my ancestors from just my
> father's side came from Persia, they went to Afghanistan, so they were Persians. Am I
> Persian? By no means! I don't know, they settled in Peshawar, which is the very
> northern part of Pakistan and those people are Pathans, so they are my grandfather's
> sisters, lived in Peshawar. They settled in Peshawar, they had family in Peshawar. They
> didn't even speak Urdu, which is the language we speak. They only spoke Pashtun, so, by
> that definition, they were Pathans. So am I a Pathan? No, but my father's sister, my
> grandfather's sister didn't even speak the language I speak and the same is true with my
> mother's side of the family. As I said, this is just my father's side of the family. My
> mother spoke Persian because her father had Persian lineage and so he spoke Persian. My
> mother was taught Persian at home. (Interview 4, pp. 3-4)

Race is complicated for Gnana, because her family's ancestry, nationalities, languages, and
cultures are rich and varied, thus conceptualizing race beyond biology to include culture.

Gnana clarifies her conception of race when explaining that for her a South Asian
American racial identity includes these attributes: ancestry, place of birth, history (lived history or

shared history), knowledge of the history of the place, and geographic location. She finds it

difficult to explain what being SAA means to her. So I ask her to explain why she is not

Southeast Asian, but SAA. This is relevant, because as I was recruiting participants for my study,

somebody erroneously told Gnana that I was looking for Southeast Asian Americans and she was

quick to inform them that she was not Southeast Asian. She identifies as South Asian.

> I don't have a Southeast Asian ancestry. I wasn't born in Southeast Asia. I don't know much about that part of the world, outside of having lived in Malaysia for five years. But Southeast Asia is much bigger than just Malaysia. So those were some of the things. If you started asking me about the history of the independence of Malaysia, I wouldn't know what to tell you, because I know nothing about it. But I do know a little bit about what happened in India and Pakistan, having family who had lived through it and from having read about it a little bit. (Interview 3, p. 13)

South Asian American as outsider

Moreover, although Gnana does identify as South Asian, she says that she does not

usually have to do identify herself racially in public, since mainstream Americans do it for her by

looking at her and placing her as an outsider. Her outsider status is a stand in for South Asian.

> I will say I'm South Asian. I think I don't have to define myself. This is the advantage and the disadvantage. I don't have to define myself; people look at me and they place me as an outsider. … Just being different; you're different. You don't belong. [Based on] My appearance, my skin color, the way I speak. The way I live my life. (Interview 4, p. 4)

Thus outsider becomes a racial category on the basis of Gnana's appearance, skin color, speech

and the way she lives her life much like the South Asian immigrants from the first wave

(Chandrasekhar, 1982b; Jensen, 1988; V. Lal, 2008; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1989). Because

Gnana is always seen as an outsider, she does not care if her SAA racial identity is a disadvantage

socially, as evidenced by her response to the question, "Has race been a disadvantage socially?"

> Socially, I don't care. [laughter]… Because I'm an outsider; I can never be an insider so why care? (Interview 4, p. 9)

South Asian American racial identity is a disadvantage in the academy

In contrast to Gnana not worrying about race socially, she asserts that the SAA racial

identity is a disadvantage in the academy – academically and professionally. According to Gnana,

her SAA racial identity has never been a privilege; only a disadvantage. It is a disadvantage when

it comes to applying to college because SAAs and other Asian Americans are already represented

in higher education (Sharon S. Lee, 2006; Sharon S Lee, 2008) and it is a disadvantage

professionally because she feels that her "skin's dark but not dark enough" for diversity related

positions in the academy.

According to Gnana, her sons' SAA identity was a disadvantage to them when they were

applying to college as compared to their Hispanic and African American peers because Asian

Americans, including SAAs, are not considered disadvantaged groups in the academy unlike

other minority groups. This was Gnana's response to my question when I asked her, "in the

context of the U.S., has your race ever been a privilege to you?" She begins to explain about her

sons' admission to college:

> There is no instance that I can think of. I can think of a lot of places where it's been a
> disadvantage. It's difficult being South Asian, I think when you're looking in academia.
> South Asians are so well placed, so they do so well as students, as administrators, as
> faculty, that they don't fall into that category of disadvantaged groups. They're a
> minority, but they're not a disadvantaged group. So it was very interesting when my sons
> were applying for college. I had a colleague whose husband was Hispanic and so her
> daughter, who was applying for college at the same time was categorized as Hispanic and
> I had another colleague who's from Africa but her children were born here so they were
> African Americans and even though my sons had better credentials than those three
> children academically, those three were the ones who were getting recruiters from
> Northwestern, Harvard, MIT, coming to their house because they were Hispanic and
> African American. And undoubtedly, doing very good academically, but no better than
> my sons, but because they were Asian Americans…not Hispanic, not African American,
> they didn't have people knocking at their door because those schools don't have to worry
> about Asian Americans; they have them. (Interview 4, pp. 7-8)

This is the first time in Gnana's narrative that she discusses the concept of race in concrete terms.

Thus far, Gnana has not wanted to discuss race and what SAA meant to her racially. Here she

states clearly that for college admissions being SAA is a disadvantage racially. The contradiction

is between tools and rules – being SAA and affirmative action policies for college admissions.

This contradiction is pretty clear cut and could be why it is easier for Gnana to discuss race in this

context rather than in more vague and abstract ways.

Gnana gives another concrete example from her life by illustrating this contradiction in a

different context - her possibilities for advancement at the university - when the same affirmative

action policies at the university level affect her career prospects negatively because she is SAA,

not black. Gnana thinks that she has not gotten several diversity related positions at the university

even though she is qualified for them, because diversity is conflated with black in the academy.

This seems to be a double jeopardy situation for her. Her skin color is brown, but it is not dark

enough or white enough for the diversity jobs that she wants. Through no fault of her own, she is

in a conundrum, a lose-lose situation because of the color of her skin.

> I say this and my husband and my sons always tell me it's not a nice thing to say but
> there have been times when I felt that my skin's dark but not dark enough. And a very
> recent example of that is and this is not the first time it has happened. I applied for a
> position in the grad school. Which I talked with the Associate Vice Provost about it and I
> thought I was very well qualified, but I knew I won't get that position and, actually just
> yesterday I got a letter from them saying they have hired somebody else. And, even
> though I don't know at this point who they hired, I am almost positive that it's probably a
> black person that they hired for that position because it's a diversity related position and,
> for some reason, they put [a] box around it as well. If it's related to diversity, it has to be
> a black person. It doesn't matter how qualified you are; they're not even going to look at
> you. They might look at a white person before they look at you because it makes them
> look good to put a white person in that role, but a brown person; it doesn't matter. This is
> at least the third time I can say this has happened. … but in an earlier situation, it was
> again diversity, assistant dean for diversity for the college of [name of college]. … my
> last meeting was with the dean, and he told me that the dean's going to meet with the last
> two candidates and then make a decision and then they hired a black woman. …the dean
> called and said, "I think you were a very good candidate for this position. We chose to go
> with the other candidate because she had connections with the HBCUs." Historically
> black universities and colleges. So that was his justification. So, yes, I mean, these are
> professional instances that there's no way that I can challenge. (Interview 4, pp. 8-9)

This is another instance in which Gnana believes that her skin color and racial identity have

worked against her. Until now she has been clearly separating skin color and race, but now she

seems to be connecting them. Brown and the SAA racial identity are juxtaposed against the black racial identity. Gnana is conceptualizing skin color as race.

Defining moment as a South Asian American

Since the mahajar trope shapes much of Gnana's narrative of belonging, there is a somewhat conscious resistance at times to her desired outcome which is to identify as SAA as illustrated by some of her narratives. This contradiction is resolved in part when Gnana discusses how being SAA is a disadvantage, thus owning that identity when she relates a defining moment in her life when she identified as a SAA. She says when she heard the then candidate, now President Obama say "We will go into Pakistan if need be," in other words, "attack Pakistan" or bomb Pakistan, it "touched a nerve in me, that made me realize, where I was from" (Interview 3, p. 37). Her most salient identity at that time was SAA.

> Since we're two weeks from the elections [in 2010]. One thing I remember very clearly is Obama speaking when he was campaigning the first time, and he said, I don't remember the exact words, but he said, "We will go into Pakistan if need be." …But that hit home, really, that's a really important issue. His campaign platform… he was talking about something that touched a nerve in me, that made me realize where I was from. Yeah. And I have family there. And so if somebody's talking about dropping a bomb there, then you are directly impacted by it. (Interview 3, p. 37)

Conclusion

Gnana's racialized experience can be analyzed using three activity systems: Wanting to be accepted, Identifying as American, and Identifying as SAA. Wanting to be accepted is the main activity system and the other two are sub systems of that. Gnana is a perpetual mahajar, not belonging anywhere – a mahajar in Pakistan and foreigner/other in the U.S. – while always wanting to be accepted. The politics of her non-belonging for her and her sons in the U.S. is always on the basis of their marked bodies - skin color and appearance, thus it is cyclical and not
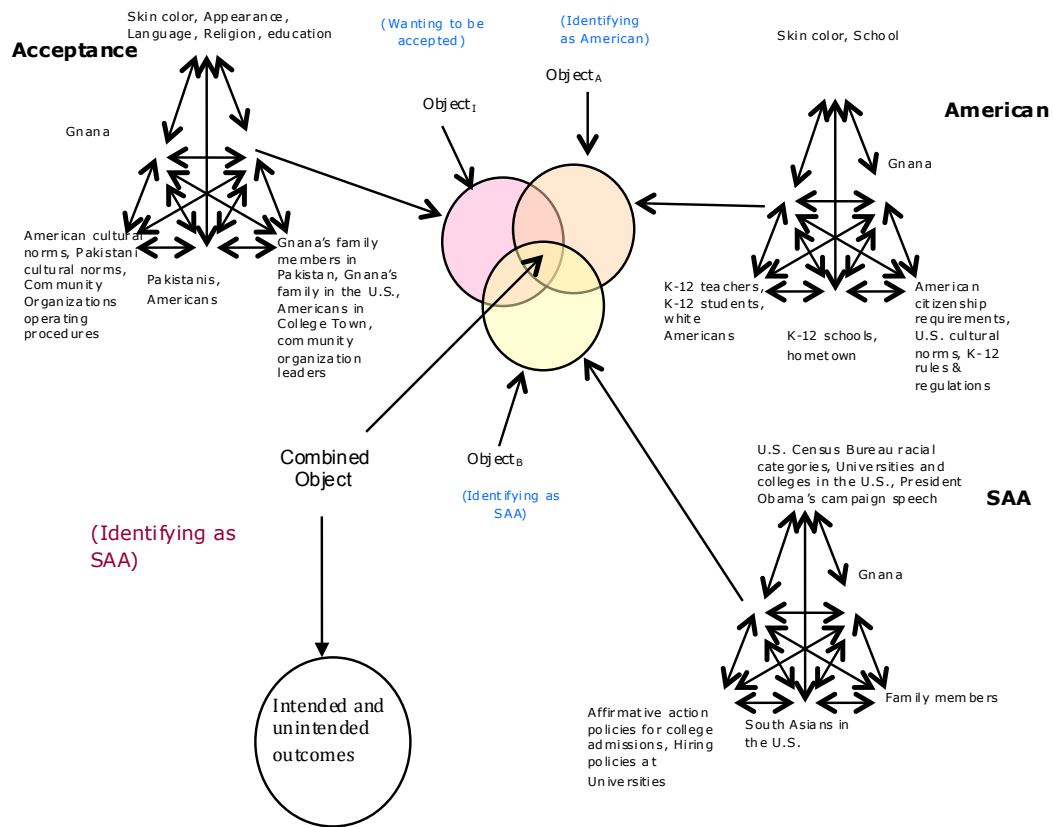
Figure 5-4: Gnana's activity network.

easily broken. Their marked bodies seem to elicit racist talk and racist thinking which seem to be

catalysts for Gnana to learn about the concept of race.

The concept of race is complicated for Gnana. She is resistant to claiming a racial identity

or even acknowledging the role that race plays in her life. She is willing to accept the role that

skin color plays in her life and how it shapes her life, but does not see an equivalence between

skin color and race. However, she is able to use her skin color to advocate for people of color in

the community through her community engagement and leadership activities. She also has the

ability to identify the disadvantages associated with the SAA identity. This is when she is able to

acknowledge her racial identity and recognize how it has negatively affected her and her sons'

opportunities for advancement professionally and academically. Gnana has learned the social meaning of race in the U.S. and its effects on her, her family, and her country of origin, Pakistan, even though she is averse to using the language of race.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Implications

Overview

In this chapter, I present the conclusions and implications of the study. I conclude that the concept of race is relevant to the South Asian experience in the United States of America. The participants in the study learn to be racialized and learn to identify as South Asian American, a distinct racial identity. The data suggests that race is a learned construct and that religion and caste (culture) in conjunction with skin color, hair color and other physical attributes (biology) constitute the SAA racial category. This calls for a radical retheorization of race like Loomba (1998) recommends.

Learning the Concept of Race

This study finds that the concept of race is relevant in the South Asian American experience. It has powerful social meanings and effects (Harpalani, 2013). The concept of race shapes and structures (Omi & Winant, 1994) the lives of the SAA participants and the lives of their family members, including their children, siblings, and parents through the major institutions – school, family, and work. Moreover, all four participants learned the concept of race through their collective activity systems that are a part of human life. The activity systems that constitute the racialized experience are driven by motive-objects that pertain to belonging and identity, such as wanting to be accepted, becoming American and identifying as South Asian American. The learning occurred through their interactions as part of human activity, not through

the participants' endeavors to learn about race. This learning was an intentional or unintentional outcome of activity. Gallifrey began to learn about the concept of race and how it shaped his life when he attended K-12 schools. Gnana began to learn about race living daily in a predominantly white area in the U.S. when she and her sons were marked as *other* solely on the basis of their skin color and appearance. Likewise, Persis began to learn about the concept of race and how it shaped her life when her brother was called "brown guy" by his boss and her American born son started identifying as Indian instead of American when the family moved to a predominantly white area in the Northeast. Satya began to learn about race in the stark separation of her identity in the private and public sphere through her performance of culture: speaking Hindi, dressing in Indian clothes, and practicing religion in the home as opposed to speaking English, dressing in non-Indian clothes, studying ballet, and cheerleading outside the home, in the neighborhood and in school. Following Taylor (2013), the participants learn about race talk, race thinking, and racism through prevailing conditions and the socio-historical context of their lives. In agreement with Harpalani (2013), they learn about racial claims and racial ascriptions: to make racial claims about their identity instead of internalizing ascriptions about their racial identity. They learn to claim an Indian or SAA racial identity, instead of fitting neatly into the black/white binary.

The participants identify themselves racially as Indian or SAA, not black or white unlike Mazumdar's (1989) contention. Gallifrey, Satya, and Persis identify as both Indian and SAA, although Indian is preferred when racial identity is tied to country of origin, Indian culture, or religion. The equation of Hindu with Indian is something that Gallifrey, Satya and Persis do and is not something new. It is common in the Yankee Hindutva (Prashad, 2000) or Hindu Nationalist discourse in the U.S. (Kurien, 2007; Mathew & Prashad, 2000) as well as the orientalist, nationalist, and Hindu Nationalist discourses (Kurien, 2007; Prashad, 2000) in the Indian subcontinent. But what is interesting is that Persis equates being a Parsi, Indian Zoroastrian, with being Indian as well. Here it is a conflation of ethnicity and religion with racial identity.

SAA identity label is problematic

The SAA identity label is not one embraced by all the participants in this study like Lal (2008) contends many from the diaspora do not. Persis does not identify as SAA; she identifies as Indian – an identity clearly tied to the nation-state. Gallifrey and Satya move fluidly between Indian and SAA, and use SAA when referring to their fraternities and sororities. These are examples of Prashad's (2012) argument that the "emergence of the South Asian American was the nature of the social life on college campuses" (p. 14). It is a political and social identity term for the American born Indians like Satya and Gallifrey as Prashad (2012) contends. However, Indian is usually the preferred identity marker when it is constructed around an Indian religion like Hinduism or Indian culture. This is in line with Kurien's (2007) argument that Hindu Americans want to be called Indians and passionately repudiate being called SAAs. Gnana is an anomaly, since she identifies with Pakistan not India, and more importantly problematized the concept of race. But I am imposing the SAA identity on this group, since Indian seems to be becoming an exclusionary term with the rise of the Hindu Right in India (e.g. the landslide victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2014 elections in India) and the U.S. (e.g. the rise of the India Lobby in the U.S. with its right wing leaning; Prashad 2012). Yet, SAA remains a problematic label that lends itself to further research.

School as site of racialization and racism

School is a site of racialization for all four participants. Gallifrey and Satya, as students, were racialized in the K-12 system through their interactions with fellow students, and Gallifrey additionally through his interactions with parents, teachers, and administrators. Persis and Gnana, as mothers of children in the K-12 system, were racialized through their children's racialized and

racist experiences. Gallifrey, Persis and Gnana's racialization took place in predominantly white schools in predominantly white areas. Gnana talks about the role that race plays in the SAA experience in higher education. It is her perception that since SAAs are overrepresented in higher education, it has resulted in SAAs not qualifying for admission into prestigious colleges, thus not benefitting from affirmative action policies. She also talks about SAAs "not being dark enough" to count as diversity in higher education. This is what Lee (2006; 2008) calls "over-represented and de-minoritized." In this racialization, SAAs are not white, but they are not minorities either. They are racially ambiguous (Harpalani, 2013; Kibria, 1996) or as Kibria (1996) puts it, "ambiguous non whites." But this brings up the politics of identity and identification for SAAs as Mazumdar (1989) and Kurien (2007) contend – not wanting to be identified as minorities like blacks and latinos, but calling forth the ethnic victimization (Berbrier, 1998, 2002) or oppressed-minority (Kurien, 2007) discourse. In the ethnic victimization discourse, racial minorities in their efforts to assimilate use dual strategies – ethnic pride and ethnic victimization like the SAAs do. They call on their rich Indian heritage or ancient Hindu religion and at the same time on their ethnic marginality as Kurien (2007) argues the Hindu Americans do. Gnana and her American born non-white sons are always seen as *other,* the oppressed minorities*,* but when it comes to higher education, there are no benefits to be reaped from this identity. Here, they are not seen as minorities. This is a double bind for them (Engeström, 2001).

This politics of identity and identification plays out in the workplace as well for Gnana, Satya's mother, and Persis' brother. They are all brown – named, ascribed, perceived, and identified. Gnana is not white, but not dark enough to qualify for diversity positions in her job. Persis' brother is overtly called brown and for him and Persis, it is pejorative and the equivalent of being called a "nigger." Satya's mother is made to feel brown overtly and covertly because of her culture and Indian education – when she is asked to remove her nose ring at work because it is not professional or when she feels that she is not taken "as seriously at work" by her boss

because she is Indian. Gnana like Gallifrey are made to feel not white on the basis of their skin color, so they become brown. Gallifrey chooses to be brown once he finds out he is Indian. He refers to himself as brown throughout the three interviews.

Family is another institution of racialization for all the participants and one of the main sites where they learn about their SAA racial identity, learn to negotiate and find meaning in their identity within U.S. society. Mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, uncles, and aunts – nuclear and the extended family play a role in this racialization. Gallifrey grew up with his Brahmin paternal grandparents living in his house which includes a grandfather who knows Sanskrit. This influenced him with his performance of Brahminness and Hinduness which he equates with being Indian. Gallifrey's parents want him to marry a Brahmin woman like his brother who met his wife at the Brahmin *naath* that Gallifrey and his family are a part of, but Gallifrey is resistant to this type of marriage for himself. Instead he would like to marry a first or second generation SAA like him. He joined a SAA fraternity because of his brother's involvement, a defining experience that shaped his SAAness. Satya grew up with her maternal grandparents and uncle living close by and later joins the SAA sorority because her aunt was a part of it. She is a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) member because her dad is a member. The sorority and the VHP play major roles in defining her SAA identity. Persis questions what an American identity means, and defines an American as white through the experiences of her son while he is in a predominantly white area. She learns what the SAA identity means through her brother's and son's experiences with race. Gnana's experience with race in a predominantly white area helps her deal with her sons being treated as foreigners in the U.S. Furthermore, the treatment of her sons at school post 9/11 and their daily interactions with the mainstream community reinforces the idea of her and her family being mahajars in the U.S. It also confirms her belief that whites benefit from the bumiputra status and are treated as the natives or indigenous people with special rights and privileges while the *others* like her and her family are marginalized.

Racial formation

In predominantly white areas like Summer, there seems to be a conflation of white with American both on the part of the SAA participants as well as the white Americans. This is consistent with Mazumdar (1989) and Prashad's (2000) argument that SAAs conflate white with American and Goldberg (2009) that white is American. On the other hand, it is the perception of the SAA participants, that white Americans see them as black depending on the context (Gallifrey's white friend in elementary school), brown (Persis' brother's boss), or *other* on the basis of their skin color, appearance, and name. The perceived racial categories of SAAs changed even within this study and the racial categories given to SAAs in the U.S. Census changed historically (Harpalani, 2003, August; Murti, 2010). This is juxtaposed with the identification that is agentically taken on by the participants themselves which is not homogeneous either. The racial categories used most often in this study to self identify are Indian, American, and SAA. This shows that race as conceptualized by the participants in this study is a sociohistorical process called racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1986; 1994). Racial formation refers to "the process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 61). The racial category of SAA is formed through social, economic, and political forces. SAAs agentically determine the content and importance of this racial category for themselves. In turn not only are the SAAs themselves shaped by its racial meanings, they also shape its racial meanings, as evidenced in this study.

Racialization of South Asian Americans

The racialization of SAAs starts with the participants' skin color – with the ascription of race based on their skin color. Skin color is the starting point for the participants' conceptualization of race, whether a racial category is ascribed to them or they identify as one. Skin color always works in tandem with something else, such as eye color, hair color, last name, religion, caste, ethnicity, ancestry, place of birth, and geographic location, which is context specific. In other words, skin color does not operate alone as race, it is always skin color and something else depending on the context.

Religion operates as race for the participants in this study when they choose their racial identity, South Asian American. It is an agentic act for them, since they are choosing their racial identity and what makes up that racial identity. It becomes a political identity. Therefore, for both Gallifrey and Satya, the equation of Hindu with Indian, and then using that as a way to identify and distinguish themselves in the black/white racial landscape of the U.S. is a way for them to exercise agency. Prashad (2000, 2012) points out that some Hindu Nationalists even express hatred against people from other religions like Gallifrey's family members and actively participate in violence against them like Gallifrey did with his cousin in the riots in India. This is problematic in the climate of anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S., the communalism in India (Pandey, 2006), and the rise of the Hindu Right in the U.S. and India (Prashad 2000; 2012).

Persis uses her Parsi/Zoroastrian identity to separate and identify herself as Indian in the U.S. and claim her SAA racial identity. The Hindu and Zoroastrian religious identities for two of the participants, Gallifrey and Persis, are elite identities – both are from priestly castes/families, so they confer them with privilege. This might not be the case for people from non-elite religious groups, i.e. lower caste Hindus. The one non-practicing Muslim participant in this study Gnana does not conflate religion and race.

Moreover, all four participants are from well-educated, middle to upper-middle class, professional families with social capital. This group could easily fit under the model minority label. This group is choosing the SAA racial identity, since the SAA racial identity is an elite identity for them. It confers privileges and advantages – caste (Brahmin), religious (Hindu), ethnic (Parsi), and class (mahajar) privileges. Therefore, they have a stake in holding on to this identity. This label differentiates them as an elite group in their own subjectivity and their interactions amongst SAAs. SAAs know the significance of a Brahmin, Hindu, Parsi, etc. as opposed to being named *other* or non-white, both in their experience inferior labels. Moreover, the Brahminness and Hinduness operates much like whiteness in the U.S. context and confers them with unearned privileges and advantages much like white privilege (p. 217). Whether this is recognized or unrecognized by the protagonists, it gives them the additional privilege of being able to exclude others. For Goldberg (2009), racism is about exclusion, so SAAs can use their Brahminness or Hinduness to exclude *others*, much like Gallifrey's extended family members hating Muslims, Satya's father not wanting his son to have Malu Christian friends, or Gallifrey's family wanting him to marry within the Brahmin caste.

Of the two Hindu participants in the study, Satya did attend VHP camp and is a member of the VHP. This seems to support Kurien's (2009) contention that second generation American Hindus seem to be more prone to be Hindu Nationalists, but Satya's VHP membership seems to be a more religious rather than political identity with little knowledge on her part about the meaning of Hindu nationalism. Gallifrey on the other hand has no interest or affiliation with Hindu nationalism according to his interviews. His Brahminness and the privilege embedded in that high caste identity seems to be enough insulation for him. He does not need the affordances provided by the Hindutva identity.

SAA interest sororities and fraternities are other important sites of racialization for two of the participants, Satya and Gallifrey. This is a site of SAA racialization about which very little

has been written therefore, having potential for further research. The SAA sorority and fraternity experience molds and shapes their SAA identity. Before the sorority, Satya struggled with her SAA identity as she identifies as a Hindu and by proxy an Indian, only in the private sphere. There is a stark separation between her American identity (in the public sphere) and Indian identities. It is through her SAA interest sorority that she is able to meld her Indian and American identities to become SAA, a social and political identity (Prashad, 2012). This sorority experience challenges her Hinducentric, utopian idea of Indianness because she does not find her ideal SAA (SAAs just like her) either at the sorority or at the univerity. This makes her think through what the SAA identity means to her much like Gallifrey.The sorority most importantly gives her the space and opportunity to be SAA in the public sphere by being part of a SAA identified organization where she has a platform to champion against the issue of domestic violence amongst SAAs as the sorority philantropy project. Moreover, she questions whether SAAs are modern or traditional, a common Western trope by comparing her mother with her sorority sister's mother unlike Gallifrey who seems to relegate SAAs to tradition.

The fraternity helps Gallifrey define his SAA identity as it helps him to network personally and professionally with other SAAs and figure out what the SAA identity means to him. He is quite clear on how he differentiates between Indian and American values. It was in black and white terms. There is not much grey or similarities between the two. Still there are differences that showcase his internal struggle of how he identifies himself and how he segments his life.

Race and racism are complicated concepts. They are not the same conceptually, but as Goldberg (2009) argues, "they are deeply connected conceptually and politically (p. 9). The participants experience racism and they exhibit racial prejudice themselves. They fight against racism and make efforts to fight it structurally as well (for example, Gnana joining the community based organizations).

Implications

Race theory

This particular group of SAAs conceptualize race as racial formation (Omi & Winant, 1986; 1994) that shapes their experience – from how they self identify to how they are perceived by dominant society – since race is a "central axis" of their social relations (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 61). Thus my data suggests race is not a tangible, objective phenomenon, but rather a learned social construct open to varying attributions and interpretations (Gnanadass, 2014). By conceptualizing race as a tangible phenomenon, people are ascribed inherent qualities based on their race and treated in particular ways. Through participants in this study, one can see that race is a social construct. It takes form in the sociocultural context.

The conception of race is context-specific. The culture, history, and politics of the U.S. and the Indian subcontinent constitute the concept of race for this group of SAAs and this conception of race is dynamic and fluid. Race, racism and racialization are embedded within the power relations in U.S. society.

The conception of race for this group of SAAs starts with skin color, but it always occurs in tandem with other attributes within the sociocultural context. Skin color is not only combined with other physical characteristics, such as hair color, facial features, and eye color, but also with cultural categorizations like religion, caste, and country of origin. Thus, race is conceptualized beyond biology to culture like Loomba (1998) argues. Religion and caste become attributes of race like Loomba (1998) proposes. I am not contending religion is always an attribute of race (to do so would be to essentialize them both; Gnanadass, 2014). However, as race is a social construct open to varying attributions and interpretations, I am proposing for some SAAs, like Gallifrey and Satya, that religion (Hinduism) is an attribute of race (Gnanadass, 2014). The SAA

conceptualization of race is different from the dominant U.S. perspective on race which I suggest calls for a radical retheorizing of race like Loomba (2009) proposes. It decenters the dominant perspective and makes space to look at the concepts of race, racism, and racialization in new ways.

South Asian Americans are not white

Even though Hinduism is conflated with Aryan in mythical Aryan race theory (Ballantyne, 2002; Leopold, 1970, 1974; Mazumdar, 1989; Trautmann, 2004) and therefore with white in the U.S. context, the participants in this study do not identify as white. This is because they claim a South Asian American or Indian identity which is distinct from the black or white racial identity. But racial relations for this group of SAAs are spoken primarily in relationship to whites. Blacks and other racial groups are mentioned only when speaking in terms of affirmative action or diversity. This is problematic in a post-Ferguson and Black Lives Matter era when racial tensions in the U.S. are high and there is a need for coalition across different racial groups. Prashad (2001) has written about such coalitions historically and the current efforts by second generation SAAs in their commitment to social justice and equity (Prashad, 2012) due to their racialization by growing up in this country. Hopefully more commitment happens with the increasing racialization of SAAs today post 9/11.

Critical race theory and postcolonial theory

Critical race theory as an intervention into postcolonial theory (Schueller, 2003) focuses attention on race as an important category of analysis, since race shapes and structures the lives of SAAs. Race has social meaning. Race does not exist separately from capitalism in the U.S.

context and is dialectically constituted by it. Race plays a central role in the lives of SAAs, thus

data from this study suggests that race should be a category of analysis in the South Asian

experience unlike Spivak (as cited in Schueller, 2003) and Prashad (2000) who propose

subsuming race under capitalism. Race as conceptualized by the participants in this study

encompasses (a) race thinking (Taylor, 2013), (b) race talk (Taylor, 2013), (c) the participants'

racialization, and (d) their experiences with and of racism in their social, political and historical

context. The focus of the analysis is on their racial formation. That is why the conceptualization

of race in this study pushes the concept of race beyond the narrow way of thinking about race

which is limited to the human body and blood lines (biology; Taylor, 2013) to include religion

and caste. Religion and caste (culture) in conjunction with skin color, hair color and other

physical attributes (biology) constitute the racial category of SAAs and the racial formation of

this group.

The racial formation of SAAs or the Racial South Asian Americanization following

Goldberg's (2009) language is different from other groups, because of their history in the U.S.

and the Indian subcontinent. This helps to explain the racialization of this group of SAA

participants. This disrupts the black/white binary, makes space for identities like the SAA racial

identity in the U.S. racial landscape, and fits in with the idea of differential racialization (Delgado

& Stefancic, 2005, 2012) in CRT. Differential racialization refers to the cultural and political

processes that ascribe racial characteristics and meanings to different minority groups at different

times in response to the needs of the labor market and the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic,

2005). Racial South Asian Americanization clearly demonstrates how the interest convergence of

the labor market, the state, and dominant society have not only manipulated the nature,

composition, and rights of SAAs in the country (Harpalani, 2003; Prashad, 2000), but also the

racial identity formation and the meanings attached to those identity categories (racialization).

Moreover, the racial category of SAA itself, which is distinct and separate from black and white, shows that the racialization of different racial groups is different in the U.S.

Racial South Asian Americanization, the racialization of SAAs, is similar to Goldberg's (2009) Racial Americanization, Racial Palestianization, Racial Europeanization, and Racial Latinoamericanization – differential global racializations which are racialized responses to neoliberalism and dominant society. One of the specific ways racialization works in the U.S. is when white becomes conflated with American (Goldberg, 2009). Here race and nationality are collapsed together, thus making particular non-whites like SAAs, other Asian Americans, latinos, etc. foreigners or outsiders in their own countries. This mimics the bumiputra policy from other countries like Malaysia without having to legally implement it in the U.S. context. White privilege is hegemonic - entrenched, pervasive, and taken for granted – it does not need legal coercion.

Desicrit: South Asian American critical race theory

Harpalani (2003, 2013) uses critical race theory to analyze the SAA experience and has named this strand of CRT as Desicrit (Harpalani, 2013) to increase racial consciousness among SAAs and to form cross-racial coalitions (Harpalani, 2013, p. 179). Desi is a term used to refer to South Asian Americans derived from *desh* (country), meaning "those who are… of one's own country" as opposed to people from "videsh (a foreign land)" (V. Lal, 2008, p. x). According to Harpalani (2013), one of the distinguishing characteristics of Desicrit is the racial ambiguity of SAAs (a) formally by their racial categorization by the government and (b) informally by "racialized symbols," (Harpalani, 2013, p. 180), such as physical appearance. SAAs are hard to characterize racially. This racial ambiguity shapes their racial identity and their racial positioning in the U.S. racial hierarchy. This study challenges the informal racial ambiguity of SAAs in terms

of both ascription of identity and claiming of identity. In a predominantly white area, participants are seen in relationship to being white. SAAs are not white; therefore, they are the *other*. It could be because of post 9/11 or the lighter skin tone of these participants, but they were not seen as black in general. One of them was mistaken for Italian, Jewish, etc. in a major city in the Northeast, but this does not happen in Summer. It is white or *other*. This *othering* is salient in their identity formation resulting in the making of a SAA identity.

Harpalani's (2013) other main point is the continuing salience of the black/white binary for SAAs in terms of the "social meaning of race " (pp. 182-183). He states that because of the racial ambiguity of SAAs, it could be argued that the black/white paradigm is no longer important in the U.S. racial hierarchy. But Harpalani contends that the terms black and white are meaningful as "the two racial statuses with the most salient social meanings in America to other groups" (pp. 182-183). This holds true in this study as well, even though the SAA racial identity, does disrupt the black/white binary and makes it instead a racial continuum. Race confers privileges, disadvantages, or both, and shows that it is still salient, thus making a post-racial U.S. a myth.

Feminist theory

Findings from this study focus on mothering and how two mothers became racialized through their sons. There is existing scholarship on mothering and racialization on Latina mothers (G. R. López, 2003; Marchevsky & Theoharis, 2000; Villenas, 2001), welfare mothers (Fujiwara, 2008; Hancock, 2004; Williams, Himmel, Sjoberg, & Torrez, 1995), and Asian American mothers (Fujiwara, 2008; Twine, 1996). The studies on Latina and welfare mothers focus on mothers from low socio-economic status and non-privileged backgrounds. What makes this study different from others is the educational and professional composition of these mothers - SAAs from elite backgrounds – one with a Ph.D. another with a Bachelor's and co-owner of a

restaurant. The racialization of these mothers is interspersed with their privilege (their citizenship status, income and educational level, etc.) as well as their hardships and challenges. Future research with this group as well as a comparison study between the different groups could be beneficial and illuminating as well.

There is a stark contrast in Satya's identity claim (Harpalani, 2013) and identity performance in the private and public sphere. She is Hindu/Indian in the domestic sphere (Pateman, 2006) and American in the public sphere. The SAA interest sorority, a university organization, becomes the space where she is able to fuse both these identities. In this third space in civil society, she becomes SAA, a hybrid identity. Interestingly, it is taking on the issue of domestic violence among SAA as a philanthropic endeavor by her sorority, an issue that is traditionally confined and hidden in the domestic sphere both in U.S. and SAA society (Bhattacharjee, 1992), that she is able to merge the two identities. First of all, this shows once again how problematic it is to separate the private and the public like feminists have argued (Pateman, 2006) and how the domestic sphere "is at the heart of civil society rather than apart or separate from it" (Pateman, 2006, p. 158). Furthermore, the sorority, a space that might seem to be merely social, seems to play an important political role in the life of Satya like Prashad (2012) argues it does for second generation SAAs and might possibly be emancipatory for her.

Feminist ethnography as an approach in this study was emancipatory for the participants. Telling their stories gives them a forum to: (a) have a voice, reflect on their experiences and their racial identities, and its meaning for them, and (b) make it a part of U.S. history.

Implications for South Asian Americans

South Asian American is a separate racial category with social meaning and effects in the U.S. racial landscape. It is a distinct racial category in the black/white continuum which is a

superior identity marker. It is also a positive identity for this group of SAAs. It is a hybrid identity

melding their *other* racial identity with their American identity. This hybrid identity is not one

without contradictions, but it has become a political and social identity. Prashad (2012) argues

that it is especially so for second generation SAAs who are committed to social justice and

equity. For many of them like Satya and Gallifrey this identity formation as a SAA starts in

college in SAA organizations (Prashad, 2012).

The SAA identity is constituted by what is thought of as race in the popular imagination –

skin color, and adds religion and caste. What is problematic about this formulation are the

religions and castes that are conceptualized and thought of as SAA by the participants in this

study in this social and political milieu in India, Pakistan, and the U.S. Hinduism and

Zoroastrianism are conceptualized as SAA and this shapes the racial experiences of the

participants in particular ways. The question arises if Christianity, Islam or the other religions

would be conceptualized as SAA. The Brahmin caste is conceptualized as SAA, nonetheless this

SAA identity, which seems to be inclusive and pluralistic, might be an elite and privileged

identity. The upper caste Brahmin identity is one that is grounded in a history of caste oppression

in India (Bayly, 2001; Dirks, 2001; Moffatt, 2015) and it is a privileged self-identity here in the

U.S. as well. But it does not have the same privileged social status for mainstream Americans

even though it is used by Gallifrey as a positive identity marker. Brahmin identity politics is an

area for further study, since the more privileged Indians are the ones who emigrated to the U.S. in

the second wave post-1965 (Jeff, Charlotte, & Sarah, 2000). Moreover, this brings the other

important questions – who is an authentic Indian and who decides?

Learning race: Implications for adult education

Although race in adult education is a topic that has been written about (Alfred, 2010; Bowman, Merriweather, & Closson, 2014; Brookfield, 2003, 2014; Closson, 2010b; Closson, Bowman, & Merriweather, 2014; Flowers, 2010; Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; M.-y. Lee, 2010; Ngatai, 2010; Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, III, & Brookfield, 2010a, 2010b), we continue to struggle with anti-racist pedagogy. One of the main contributions of this study is not a new one, but one that needs to be constantly reinforced: Race is learned. It is not inherent and natural. It is a social construct. Like learning, race is culturally and historically situated. The conceptualization of race is dynamic and dependent on the social, political and historical context. Moreover, assuming a racial identity (racialization) is a learned behavior. Racism is learned as well. Since, school is a site of racialization and racism, school can become a site for learning anti-racism. The challenge for educators is how to go about teaching anti-racism.

These are some findings in this study that could be helpful for educators: first, educators cannot assume they know the racial identity of the learners. Assuming to know the racial identity of the learners, could lead to labeling and ascribing inherent characteristics to them. Ask learners how they identify themselves and to write stories about what their racial identity means to them, how they learned about race, and what the concept of race means to them. This is one of the strategies to promote dialogue about race, racial identity, and the meanings attached to it. This strategy will also help problematize the black/white paradigm and the social meanings attached to it. This would be valuable not only in a classroom with non-white learners, but also in a class with predominantly white learners. White is a racial identity with social meaning and effects that should be examined and talked about as well. This would further help to examine the inherent privilege of being unnamed – white not being seen as a race and the structural consequences of that privilege of being the norm. This is one of the ways to enter into a dialogue about white

privilege. These types of dialogue might help educators see learners as individuals with subjectivity and agency to act and change; as individuals with potential, not categories or labels, such as Indian, Muslim, at-risk, etc.

Second, anti-racist pedagogy needs to be consciously incorporated into the curriculum, since race thinking, "a way of assigning generic meaning" to human differences (Taylor, 2013, p. 16) is prevalent in U.S. society. Third, creating a space to talk about race should be intentionally built into the curriculum. Finally, develop a "common language" of race, so everybody in the classroom has a common understanding of the key terms used in race discourse, i.e. race, racism, racial categories, white, black, latino, etc. Coming up with working definitions of these key terms might be beneficial starting points, since there are misguided assumptions that everybody understands the language of race the same way.

CHAT's analytical framework helped to clearly delineate the cultural historical context of the participants' activities as well as to bridge the connection between the Indian subcontinent and the U.S., to examine the participants' learning. One of the limitations of CHAT was the heuristic of the activity triangle made up of the six elements. This triangle constrained the data analysis because the data had to be broken up artificially into separate categories, such as division of labor or rules when it could have been both. There needs to be another heuristic to assist with the analysis. This also could be another consideration for future research.

Limitations and Future Research

The participants in this study are from well-educated, middle to upper-middle class, professional families with social capital. They are an elite group in terms of religion, caste, class, and ethnicity. This is a limitation of the study. Even though this study cannot be generalized, this

was an in-depth examination of the racialized experiences of this particular group of South Asian Americans. Other studies are needed to research other SAA groups.

Some of the participants used their Indianness, a social and political identity, to locate themselves on the upside power, because of their caste, religion, and class positions. In other words, Indian was a superior racial identity marker for them. But a more diverse group of participants made up of different class positions, castes, regions, religious affiliations, etc. might have contested this conception of Indianness as superior on the racial hierarchy. This opens a space for further research with different groups of SAA participants and would shed more light on the research questions.

This research started with my interest in examining color consciousness among SAAs, however, this did not come out in this study. It could be because the participants are light skinned or my interview questions did not elicit this information. There is some research on skin color and SAA women (Jha & Adelman, 2009; Rahman, 2002; Sahay & Piran, 1997), but future research on colorism among SAAs and between SAAs and other groups is needed. Research on skin color and SAA men could be illuminating as well.

I argue that there is an ambiguity in the literature over the origins and nature of SAA racism. Specifically, I state that there is no agreement whether the racist traditions of SAAs have their origins in the Indian subcontinent or in the U.S. (Prashad, 2000). This is an area that I barely explored and needs further exploration.

Race relations between SAAs and mainstream Americans post-9/11 have worsened. Prashad (2012) and Harpalani (2013) have called for coalition building between SAAs and other racial groups to promote social justice and equity. Studies comparing race relations and coalition building between SAAs and African Americans, also SAAs and other people of color post-9/11 and post Ferguson with the rise of the Black Lives Movement (Harpalani, 2013) should be pursued for building future alliances.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Guide for Interview(s) on the Histories, Experiences, and Narratives Of South Asian Americans (Murti, 2010)[2]

INTERVIEW ONE PROTOCOL

Guide For Interview(s) on The Histories, and Narratives Of South Asian

Americans

The interviews for this study will be semi-structured life history interviews. The following questions will serve as a guide for the interviews, with questions to be covered with participants in bold followed by possible prompts.

1. Background Information: I first want to ask you a little about your background…

   a. **Your full name**
   b. **Do you have a nickname?**
   c. **How old are you?**
   d. **Where were you born?**
       1. **If not in the US, ask when moved to the US**
   e. **What is your citizenship?**
       1. **If not US, ask if permanent resident of US**

2. Tell me about your family? What is your family like? What is your family life like?

What is your life like?

   a. Family - Spouse? Brothers and sisters, parents? Where do they live?
   b. Children? - Ages now, school

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[2] Some questions in this interview protocol are from Murti (2010).

    c.   What kinds of food do you eat at home?
    d.   What language do you speak at home?
    e.   What holidays do you celebrate?
    f.   What religious activities are you involved in?
    g.   What kinds of sports do you watch or are you involved in?
    h.   What kinds of TV programs/movies do you watch?
    i.   Do you belong to any community organizations?
    j.   What are your hobbies?

3. Tell me a little about where you grew up…

    a.   The places you lived
    b.   How long
    c.   What were you doing there?
    d.   What was it like there?
    e.   What kind of neighborhood
    f.   Who were your friends/neighbors?

---------------------------------------*IF US BORN – SKIP TO QUESTION 9*---------------------------

QUESTIONS 4 TO 6 FOR IMMIGRANTS ONLY

4. Describe the process of migrating to the US

    a.   Tell me about the circumstances (at home, school, work, etc.) that led you to move to the US
    b.   Describe the process you had to go through--professionally, legally, personally--to move to the US
    c.   What was that experience like for you--what feelings, sentiments, etc., did it evoke?

5. Describe your first days in the US

    a.   Where were you living
    b.   How was it?

6. How do you like living in the US? Why?

---------------------------------------*IF AN IMMIGRANT – SKIP TO QUESTION 11*------------------

QUESTIONS 7 TO 10 FOR US-BORN ONLY

7. Which member (s) of your family moved to the US

8. Describe the process of them migrating to the US

a. Tell me about the circumstances (at home, school, work, etc.) that led them to move to the US
b. Describe the process they had to go through--professionally, legally, personally--to move to the US
c. What was that experience like for them--what feelings, sentiments, etc., did it evoke?

9. Describe their first days in the US

a. Where were they living?
b. How was it?

10. How do they like living in the US? Why?

11. How do you identify yourself? Why?

a. Indian? Asian? Indian American? Asian Indian? South Asian? South Asian American?
b. If they don't use American, ask them why?
c. What box do you check off in a census form or application form? Why?

12. Tell me a little about why you come to "K" and your experiences here…

a. How did you find out about "K"?
b. What drew you here first?
c. Tell me about your experiences here
d. Why do you keep coming?
e. Who do you come up with?

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

INTERVIEW TWO PROTOCOL

Guide for Interview(s) on Intra-racial and Inter-racial Relations at school, work and

community

1. **Tell me a little about your educational background**, including the schools you attended and where, and degrees earned…

2. **Tell me a little about your schooling**
a. How were your classes?
b. How did you like them?
c. How did you do?
d. Who did you hang out with? Did you seek them out?

e. Did race play any role in your school experiences? If so, tell me about it (probe for both positive and negative effects)

3. **Tell me about your past work experiences, for EACH, discuss the following:**
a. Name and nature of the business
b. Job position you held and your role in it
c. Persons you worked with
d. What was that experience like for you--what feelings, sentiments, etc., did it evoke?
e. Did race play any role in that work experience? If so, tell me about it (probe for both positive and negative effects)

4. **Tell me about your current employment (Type of business, ages, gender, race?)**
a. Name and nature of the business
b. Job position and your role in it
c. Persons you worked with (age, gender, racial, etc., make up)
d. What is that experience like for you--what feelings, sentiments, etc., did it evoke?
e. Did race play any role in that work experience? If so, tell me about it (probe for both positive and negative effects)

5. **Do most of the people at work know you are South Asian American without you having to tell them? How do you know?**
a. What do they usually think your race is? Why?
b. How do most of them refer to, or label, your race?
c. If someone doesn't refer to your race as you prefer, do you say anything? What do you say and why?

6. **How does a coworker/supervisor's race, class, and gender affect how you perceive and interact with him or her?**
a. Why not?

7. **Would you please share any experiences you've had with coworkers or supervisors in which your race was a privilege?**
a) How did you feel about those experiences at the time?
b) How do you feel about them now?

8. **Would you please share any experiences you've had with coworkers or supervisors who have expressed prejudice against your or discriminated against you?**
a. How did you feel about those experiences at the time?
b. How do you feel about them now?

9. **Could you tell me about the community in which you live?**

(Ages, gender, class, race, and of members?)

10. How would you describe your relationship with this community?

11. Do most of your community members know you're South Asian American without you having to tell them? Why or why not?

a. What do they usually think your race is? Why?
b. How do most of them refer to, or label, your race?
c. If someone doesn't refer to your race as you prefer, do you say anything? What do you say and why?

12. How do their perceptions of you and interactions with you vary according to their race, class, and gender?

Why not?

13. Would you please share any experiences you've had with community members in which your race was a privilege?
a) How did you feel about those experiences at the time?
b) How do you feel about them now?

14. Would you please share any experiences you've had with community members who have expressed prejudice against you or discriminated against you?

a. How did you feel about those experiences at the time?
b. How do you feel about them now?

15. How do you think that a community member's race, class, and gender affect how you perceive and interact with him or her?

Why not?

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

INTERVIEW THREE PROTOCOL

Guide for Interview(s) on the South Asian American experience

This third interview has three purposes:

1. To focus on the South Asian American experience

2. To ask additional questions pulled from the data from the first two round of questions

3. To ask specific follow-up questions of each person, questions of clarification, in most

instances

1. Tell me about your social life

a. What do you do for fun? Who do you hang out with?
b. What activities do you engage in - sports, community organizations, hobbies?
c. What organizations do you belong to and the roles you play in them?
d. Places you go beyond work and family?
e. Do you have a Facebook account? Would you add me as a friend on Facebook?

2. Tell me a little about your religious activities if any…

a. Holidays celebrated…

3. You identified yourself as a South Asian American [or however the participant identified

themselves in the first interview]. Tell me more about why you identify yourself as ….

a. Languages spoken at home
b. What kind of food do you eat at home?
c. What kinds of clothes do you wear?
d. What festivals do you celebrate?
e. Do you follow any cultural practices?
f. Regional affiliation?
g. Do you identify with any particular caste?

4. What does it mean to you to be identified as a South Asian American?

a. Race?

b. Ethnicity?

c. Region?

d. Religion?

5. When and where do you feel the "most Indian"? At home, school, work……

6. How do you and others refer to Indians or South Asians?

7. Tell me about your interactions with South Asian Americans in State College?

a. Where do you meet with them?
b. Do you belong to any South Asian American organizations?
c. Are there any South Asian American activities? Annual? Regularly?

8. Tell me about your experience as a South Asian American male/female in each place

you've lived, worked, or studied in the U.S.?

a. What were you doing in each place?
b. How long were you in each place?
c. How did people in each place respond to you as a SAA?
d. How did you respond to them?

9. Would you please share any experiences you've had in which your South Asian American identity was a privilege?
a) How did you feel about those experiences at the time?
b) How do you feel about them now?

10. Would you please share any experiences you've had in which your South Asian American identity was a disadvantage?
a. How did you feel about those experiences at the time?
b. How do you feel about them now?

---------------------------------------*IF US BORN – SKIP TO QUESTION 10*---------------------------

QUESTION 9 IS FOR IMMIGRANTS ONLY

11. What are your general feelings about studying, working, and living in the U.S.?

How would you compare and contrast it to studying, working, and living in your country of

origin?

12. Tell me about a defining experience (s) in your life in the US when you identified as a

South Asian American.

13. What does race mean to you?

14. Can you think of any other SAAs who might be interested in participating in this

research?

Appendix B

Revised Interview Protocol

Background Information: I first want to ask you a little about your background.

    a.   Your full name

    b.   Do you have a nickname?

    c.   How old are you?

    d.   Where were you born?

          1. If not in the US, ask when moved to the US

    e.   What is your citizenship?

          2. If not US, ask if permanent resident of US

    f.   Why did you or your parents move to the US?

Tell me about your family? What is your family like? What is your family life like? What is your life like?

    Prompts:

    a.   Family - Spouse? Brothers and sisters, parents? Where do they live?

    b.   Children? - Ages now, school

    c.   What kinds of food do you eat at home?

    d.   What language do you speak at home?

    e.   What holidays do you celebrate?

    f.   What religious activities are you involved in?

    g.   Do you belong to any community organizations?

Tell me about your experience as a South Asian American in the U.S.?

    Prompts:

    Where you've lived, worked, or studied

Would you please share any experiences you've had in which your South Asian American identity was a privilege?

    a)   How did you feel about those experiences at the time?

b)   How do you feel about them now?

Would you please share any experiences you've had in which your South Asian American identity was a disadvantage?

a.   How did you feel about those experiences at the time?

b.   How do you feel about them now?

Tell me about a defining experience (s) in your life in the US when you identified as a South Asian American.

Follow-up questions after the three-interview series (Rumbaut, 2011):

1. How do you define yourself racially?

2. Would you define yourself as white, black, or other? If other, specify.

3. How do "mainstream Americans" classify you racially?

All three questions were basically getting at the same thing: the respondent's racial identity.

Appendix C

Data Analysis Codes & Modeling

Table C-1: Initiating Coding.

Initial coding - 405 codes

	Name
1	~AQuestion 1~
2	~AQuestion 2~
3	~AQuestion 2A~
4	~AQuestion 2B~
5	~AQuestion 2C~
6	~AQuestion 3~
7	~AQuestion 4~
8	"Who let the colored folk in~"
9	Accepted for what I bring to the table
10	Activism is a response to racism
11	African American
12	Age
13	agentic act as a response to racism
14	American and Indian
15	American by birth
16	American by living here in America
17	American citizen
18	American culture is modern
19	American friends
20	American ideal
21	American identity
22	American is white
23	American nationalism
24	American nationality vs American identity
25	American tradition
26	American way is right and Indian way is wrong
27	American way of being
28	American way of doing
29	American way or American way of life
30	America's greatness assignment
31	Anger
32	Anger as a response to racism
33	are you black~
34	Aryans

35	Asian Indian on US census
36	Assimilation
37	Assimilation into America
38	being a class clown
39	Being Black
40	being called brown
41	being dropped off in kindergarten
42	being indian
43	Black
44	black friends
45	Black is named
46	Black is not American
47	black response to racism
48	blacks throwing the race card
49	Black/white binary
50	blending in
51	Brahmin
52	Brown
53	brown is derogatory
54	Brown is SAA identity
55	bullied at school due to race
56	called an Arab
57	called in Iranian and told to go back
58	Caste
59	Caucasian
60	Children are not racist
61	children not allowed to go out
62	children were not racist
63	Christian is not Indian (Nodes)
64	Citizenship and identity
65	Claiming a regional American identity
66	Class
67	Class and race
68	clothing
69	Coding for discourses
70	Colored or colored folk
71	common values shared by minorities
72	Communalism
73	communalism - riots in gujarat
74	Community engagement as a response to racism
75	community service
76	comparison between John and gallifrey
77	computer nerds
78	Conflating indian with hindu and hindi
79	connection to SA culture
80	Cooking

81	Country of origin
82	Culturally Indian
83	dad does not like Christian friends
84	dark skin and fair skin
85	dating and marriage
86	daughter has changed working with white Americans
87	Defining experience of being a SAA
88	Derogatory terms for SAAs
89	Diamond companies
90	Didn't trust school
91	difference between indian and american bosses
92	difference between Indian and Indian American
93	difference between Indian and SAA
94	Difference is special
95	Different lens
96	different types of indians
97	Diversity
98	divorced
99	domestic violence
100	domestic violence amongst SAAs
101	don't draw attention to yourself and stay out of trouble as a response to racism
102	don't like labels
103	Don't want to be ascribed an identity
104	drinking
105	drinking - difference between Indians and American parents
106	Drinking is not a SAA value
107	East-West Divide
108	Eating
109	Educated parents
110	education
111	Education as a response to racism
112	education is an indian value
113	Effects of racism
114	embarrassing when sudre shows
115	Embodiment
116	Embodiment or performing South Asianness
117	Enacting racial stereotypes as a response to racism
118	Enactment or performance of South Asianness
119	Enjoyment
120	entirely American or black
121	ethnicity
122	Exclusion
123	expected to represent India
124	extended family
125	Extended family is a SAA value

126	Family
127	fasting
128	feeling different
129	Feeling neglected in school
130	Feeling singled out in school
131	first generation
132	first generation see themselves as American
133	first jobs in the US
134	friends
135	Gallifrey's business partners
136	Gallifrey's family band
137	Gallifrey's bus incident
138	Gender
139	Gendered roles
140	generosity is Indian
141	giving back
142	Greek life is American
143	Guyanese Hindus
144	Guyanese Hindus are not Indian
145	hate muslims
146	Hated school
147	hindu
148	Hindu camp
149	Hindu is Indian
150	Hinduism
151	hinduism as performance
152	Hinduism as way of life
153	Hinduism is being a vegetarian
154	Hinduism is Indian culture
155	Hinduism is religious celebrations
156	Hinduism is religious holidays
157	Hinduism taught me discipline
158	Hispanic or Latino
159	Humor as a response to racism
160	Hybridity or Borderlands
161	I am Indian, not SAA
162	I didn't realize that I was Indian
163	I feel like I'm in Long Island
164	I'm American
165	I'm Indian and I'm American. I'm both
166	Identity
167	Identity as American
168	Identity as American rather than Indian
169	identity is not inherent
170	I'm Indian
171	I'm the only indian kid

172	Immigrant or 1st generation
173	Immigration
174	Importance of money
175	indian accent
176	Indian American
177	indian and jews relationship
178	Indian and SAA values
179	Indian bosses
180	indian bosses exploit you
181	indian cloth
182	indian clothes
183	indian culture
184	Indian culture is Indian Holidays
185	Indian culture is religious celebrations
186	Indian culture is SAA culture
187	Indian culture is traditional
188	indian dance
189	Indian Dance is Indian culture
190	Indian food
191	Indian identity
192	Indian identity vs identification as indian
193	Indian is a SAA
194	Indian is embodied practices not relationships
195	indian is not a minority
196	Indian language is Indian culture
197	Indian music
198	Indian music is Indian culture
199	indian parental attitudes
200	Indian parents expectations
201	indian restaurant
202	indian stereotypes
203	indian tradition
204	Indians compete with Whites
205	Indian identity or being Indian
206	Intragroup SAA relations
207	IT
208	jobs
209	Kind of spouse
210	language
211	Language is SAA
212	Learning
213	Learning about race from history
214	Learning about race from Media
215	Learning racism
216	Learning racism from family
217	Learning racism from School

218	Learning to be American
219	Learning to be Indian
220	Life as a new immigrant
221	Light skinned or dark skinned
222	Make up of SAA sorority (Nodes)
223	making money is a SAA value
224	Mala, person from the same race, treated her badly
225	Malayali culture is different from Indian culture
226	Malu johnny
227	Man's role
228	Marriage
229	meaning of Indian identity
230	Memorable quotes
231	Messing with white people
232	middle class
233	Minorities
234	Minorities moving in
235	Mistaken for latino
236	Movies are a reflection of the lives of SAAs
237	Muslim is SAA
238	Name is part of being an indian
239	Native American
240	Native-foreigner binary
241	No close social network
242	not accepted as American
243	Not American
244	Not black
245	Not bumiputra
246	not hired because I am Indian
247	Not using the word white
248	over protective indian parents
249	Pakistani is a SAA
250	Parents are immigrants
251	Parsi
252	Parsi food
253	Parsi identity
254	Parsi is Indian
255	Parsi religious celebrations (Nodes)
256	Parsi religious practices
257	Partition
258	patriarchy
259	Perceived racism
260	performance
261	persis as an indian boss
262	Place of birth
263	Playing at being a SAA

264	Playing with race
265	Playing with race - speaking in an Indian accent
266	Playing with race - speaking in ebonics
267	Politics of belonging
268	Popular culture
269	predominantly white
270	prefer living in the US
271	Pride in Indian ancestry and heritage
272	Priest family
273	primary identity
274	Problematizing the model minority thesis
275	Proud to be indian
276	Quit as a response to racism
277	Race
278	Race as a disadvantage
279	Race as performance
280	Race as performed through Hinduism
281	Race as performed through religion
282	Race as privilege
283	Race is equated to geography
284	Race is performed through Indian food
285	Race is the other or different
286	Race subaltern
287	Racial ambiguity
288	Racial identity is not white
289	Racialized narrative
290	Racism
291	racism and work
292	racism at school
293	racism based on your name
294	racism in greek life
295	racism or nationalism
296	racist school administration
297	Reaction to racism
298	Realization that I am Indian
299	Reason for immigration
300	reasons for being racist
301	Rebelling as a response to racism
302	Rednecks
303	Reinvented tradition
304	relationship with parents
305	Religion
306	religion as performance
307	religious celebrations
308	religious events
309	Reluctance to say white

310	Representing the community
311	respect for teachers is an Indian value
312	Response to Racism
313	Responsibility
314	Responsibility for inclusion
315	Rural or urban
316	SAA Culture
317	SAA culture is different from American way of life
318	SAA culture is eating Indian food
319	SAA culture is eating vegetarian food
320	SAA culture is other to American culture
321	SAA food
322	SAAfraternity
323	SAA friends
324	SAA Identity
325	SAA identity is a disadvantage
326	SAA identity is a privilege
327	SAA identity is not a privilege
328	SAA or Indian identity
329	SAA organizations
330	SAA organizations and events at PSU
331	SAA social network
332	SAA sorority
333	SAA sorority is segregated from other greek orgs
334	SAA stereotypes
335	SAA subculture
336	SAA values
337	Family is a SAA value
338	Importance of money is a SAA value
339	Respect for parents and elders is a SAA value
340	SAA values are traditional
341	Taking care of family
342	Valuing education is a SAA value
343	SAA do not value Liberal Arts education or degree
344	SAA value science, business and hotel management degrees
345	School
346	School Administration is racist
347	school as site of racialization
348	School as site of racism
349	school did not do much about the bullying
350	school experience
351	schooling
352	science education or technical education is an indian value
353	Secrecy about dating
354	Separating American and SAA friends
355	Sept 11, 2001

356	Sharing in professional lives
357	sister-in-law was INS officer
358	Skin color
359	So what was it like for you to be growing up in Mountaintop and you said that you were the only "colored people". Can you give me so instances of how you felt this way~~~~~Gallifrey~ Well, when I was young it didn't really bother me as much like probably i
360	social network
361	South Asian American is a race
362	south indians vs north indians
363	Speaking out against racism is a response to racism
364	Spousal Role
365	Stop functioning in school as a response to racism
366	Struggling with being indian
367	Students are not racist
368	Students are racist
369	Survival instinct
370	taken to be from the middle east
371	Taken to be latino
372	Taken to be Muslim or Pakistani
373	Teachers are not racist
374	Teachers are racist
375	the other
376	The other or different
377	There was actually a word for what I was
378	Tradition or traditionally
379	traditional indian vs liberal American
380	Traditional SAA parents vs progressive SAA parents
381	Traditionally American
382	Traditionally SA
383	Tradition-modernity trope
384	Typecast as a troublemaker - racism
385	vegetarian
386	VHP
387	want more than indian or SAA friends
388	wanting SAA friends
389	What are you
390	what does it mean to be called black
391	What is a SAA
392	What is not indian
393	What it means to be American
394	What it means to be Indian (Nodes)
395	what it means to be Parsi
396	what it means to be white
397	Where are you from
398	White friends

399	Whites
400	wisconsin shooting
401	Woman's role
402	won't be accepted as Americans
403	you don't belong.
404	You don't look like Indians
405	Zoroastrian

Table C-2: Finding Themes.

Finding Themes

71 Codes	46 categories	8 themes	Code
1			AMERICAN
2	1		**American is a racial identity**
			American is white
			Black is not American
			Not bumiptutra
			Where are you from
3	2		**American nationalism is taught at school by doing things the American way**
			American way is right and Indian way is wrong
4	43		**What it means to be American**
			American by birth
			American by living here in America
			American ideal is apple pie and baseball
			American is a nationality
			American way or American way of life
			Difference between American nationality and American identity
			exercising rights and responsibilities is being American
			first generation see themselves as American
			Having the right to critique America
			I'm American
			not entirely American or black
			Satya's mother not accepted as an American
5	19		**Nationalism**
			nationalism is dismissed as racism
			Not bumiptutra
			Native-foreigner binary

6	10		GENDER
7			**Gendered roles**
			Spousal Role
			Woman's role
			patriarchy
8	7		**dating and marriage**
			Brahmin Naath a good place to meet Brahmin girls
			divorced
			first generation SAA does not want to marry an SAA immigrant
			Gallifrey is dating a Hindu woman
			Gallifrey's brother married a woman from the same caste
			Gallifrey dating
			Gallifrey wants to marry someone Indian
			Gallifrey's brother met his wife at a Brahmin nath
			Gallifrey's parents don't care if he marries within the caste now
			Gallifrey's parents would like him to marry within the caste (Nodes)
			Kind of spouse
			Secrecy about dating
			Secrecy about dating among SAAs
9	8		**domestic violence**
			domestic violence amongst SAAs
	12	1	IDENTITY
10			**Citizenship and identity**
			don't like labels
			Don't want to be ascribed an identity
			Identifying as American and Indian
			primary identity
			religious identity is not inherent
			What are you
11	4		**Caste**
			Brahmin identity
			Brahmin Naath a good place to meet Brahmin girls
			Gallifrey's brother married a woman from the same caste
			Gallifrey's brother married a woman from the same caste (2)
			Gallifrey's brother met his wife at a Brahmin nath
			Gallifrey's parents don't care if he marries within the caste now
			Priest family
12	5		**Class**
			middle class
11	11		**Hybridity or Borderlands**
			I'm Indian and I'm American. I'm both
	13		Immigrant or 1st generation
13			**first generation**

			first generation SAA does not want to marry an SAA immigrant
			first generation see themselves as American
			What first generation SAA means
			What first generation SAA means
14			**Immigrants**
			first jobs in the US
			Life as a new immigrant
			Gallifrey's family band
			prefer living in the US
			Reason for immigration
			Struggling with being indian as new immigrants
	17		jobs or work
15			computer nerds
			difference between indian and american bosses
			education
			first jobs in the US
			Gallifrey's business partners
			Indian bosses
			indian bosses exploit you
			Indians compete with Whites
			Indians dominate the wholesale diamond industry
			IT
			Jobs Indians are not in
			not hired because I am Indian
			Persis as an indian boss
			sister-in-law was INS officer
16	18	2	LEARNING RACE
			Learning about race from history
			Learning about race from Media
			Learning racism
			Learning racism from family
			Learning racism from School
			Learning to be American
			Learning to be Indian
			Notable incidents
	21	3	POLITICS OF NON-BELONGING
17			**Inclusion and exclusion**
			Accepted for what I bring to the table
			Exclusion
			Identity as American rather than Indian
			I'm American but I am not accepted as one
			not accepted as American
			Not bumiptutra
			Responsibility for inclusion
			SAA sorority is segregated from other greek orgs
			Where are you from

			won't be accepted as Americans because of the color of our skin
			you don't belong
18			**Assimilation**
			Assimilating into America
			blending in as American and not standing out as Indian
			didn't want to assimilate
			Had to adjust to America
19			**had to assimilate to America**
			Struggling with being indian so had to assimilate
			not assimilating
			Taught to assimilate into America
		4	RACE (CONCEPTUALIZATION OF RACE)
20	24		**Race**
			Race as a disadvantage
			Race as performance
			Race as performed through Hinduism
			Race as performed through religion
			Race as privilege
			Race is equated to geography
21			**Race is not an inherent identity**
			I didn't realize that I was Indian
			Mistaken for latino
			taken to be from the middle east
			Taken to be latino
			Taken to be Muslim or Pakistani
			Taken to be spanish
			Race is performed through Indian food
			Race is the other or different
			RACE SUBALTERN
22	25		**Racial identity or racial category**
			African American is a racial category
			Caucasian
			Hispanic or Latino
			Native American
			Whites
23	26		**Racialization**
			Racialized narrative
			Realization that I am Indian
	27		**Racism**
24			Effects of racism
			nationalism is dismissed as racism
			not hired because I am Indian
			Perceived racism
			racism and work
			racism based on your name
			racism in greek life
			reasons for being racist
25	29		**Response or reaction to Racism**
			"Who let the colored folk in~"

		Activism is a response to racism
		agentic act as a response to racism
		Anger as a response to racism
		black response to racism
		blacks throwing the race card
		Community engagement as a response to racism
		don't draw attention to yourself and stay out of trouble as a response to racism
		Education as a response to racism
		Enacting racial stereotypes as a response to racism
		Facetiously claiming a regional American identity or an American identity
		Humor as a response to racism
		Quit as a response to racism
		Reaction to racism
		Rebelling as a response to racism
		Speaking out against racism is a response to racism
		Stop functioning in school as a response to racism
		Survival instinct to take on the responsibility to be inclusive as a response to racism
		wisconsin shooting
26		**Racist historical events for SAAs in the US**
		Sept 11, 2001
		wisconsin shooting
27		**racist incident**
		being dropped off in kindergarten
28	38	**Skin color**
		brown skin color
		dark skin and fair skin
		Light skinned or dark skinned
		Satya's mom is light skinned
		won't be accepted as Americans because of the color of our skin
		You are brown because you are Indian
		You don't look like Indians on the basis of your skin color
		Reinvented tradition
29	3	**Brown**
		Being called brown is derogatory
		brown skin color
	15	**Inter-race relationships (excluding whites)**
		indian and jews relationship
		Relationships with blacks
		black employees (moved from indian culture)
		black friends
		common values shared by minorities
30	20	**Playing with race**
		Messing with white people
		playing with race - claiming a regional American identity
		Playing with race - speaking in an Indian accent
		Playing with race - speaking in ebonics

31		RELIGION
32	28	**Religion (SAA racial identity is enacted through religion)**
		Gallifrey wants to pass on his religion to his children
33		**Hinduism**
		Fasting
34		**Hindu identity**
		Brahmin identity
		hinduism as performance
		Hinduism as way of life
		Hinduism is being a vegetarian
		Hinduism is Indian culture
		Hinduism is religious celebrations
		Hinduism is religious holidays
		Hinduism taught me discipline
35		**religion as performance**
		indian clothes
		vegetarian
36		**Religion is conflated with Indian identity**
		Christian is not Indian (Nodes)
		Guyanese Hindus are not Indian
		Hinduism is Indian
37		**religious celebrations**
		Diwali celebration
38		**religious events**
		Gharba cultural celebrations are a chance to socialize with other SAAs
39		**Zoroastrian**
		Zoroastrian religious celebrations (Nodes)
		Zoroastrian religious practices
40	6	**Communalism**
		communalism - riots in gujarat
		hate muslims
	42	VHP
		Hindu camp
		Hindu dad does not like Christian friends
41		SAA
42	30	**SAA Culture**
		Indian cultural celebration here in US same as in India
		SAA culture is different from American way of life
		SAA culture is eating Indian food
		SAA culture is eating vegetarian food
		SAA culture is other to American culture
43	31	**SAA greek life**
		Greek life is American
		SAAfraternity
44		**SAA sorority**
		connection to SA culture

		Make up of SAA sorority (Nodes)
		SAA sorority is not seen as mainstream or popular
		SAA sorority is segregated from other greek orgs
45	32	**SAA is a racial identity**
		Asian Indian on US census
		don't consider themselves white
		I'm Indian
		I'm the only indian kid
		Indian is a racial identity
46		**Problematizing the Black/white binary**
		are you black~
		I am not white
		Racial ambiguity
		Racial identity is not white
		There was actually a word for what I was
47	33	**SAA or Indian identity**
48		**Defining experience of being a SAA**
		Indian identity or being Indian
		Indian identity vs identification as indian
		Indian is a SAA
		Indian is embodied practices not relationships
		indian is not a minority
		Indian language is Indian culture
		Indian music
		Indian music is Indian culture
		indian parental attitudes
		Indian parents expectations
		indian restaurant
		indian stereotypes
		indian tradition
		science education or technical education is an indian value
49		**Problematizing the SAA identity**
		difference between Indian and SAA
		I identify as Indian, not SAA
		Partition
50		**Problematizing the SAA model minority thesis**
		Indians compete with Whites
		SAA identity is a disadvantage
		SAA identity is a privilege
		SAA identity is not a privilege
51		**Who is SAA**
		Guyanese Hindus are not Indian
		Pakistani is a SAA
52	34	**SAA parents**
		children not allowed to go out
		Educated parents
		Gallifrey's parents do not know that he eats meat
		Indian parents allow you to go to Gharba
		my parents are pretty american
		over protective indian parents

		Parents are immigrants
		Parents are pretty American
		parents didn't want Johnny to hang out with Malus
		traditional indian parents
53	35	**SAA values**
54		**Drinking is not a SAA value**
		drinking
		drinking - difference between Indians and American parents
		education is an indian value
		Extended family is a SAA value
		Family is a SAA value
		Importance of money is a SAA value
		importance of money is not a SAA value
		Indian and SAA values
		making money is a SAA value
		Respect for parents and elders is a SAA value
		respect for teachers is an Indian value
		SAA values are traditional
		Taking care of family
55		**Valuing education is a SAA value**
		SAA do not value Liberal Arts education or degree
		SAA value science, business and hotel management degrees
56	44	**What it means to be Indian or SAA**
		being brown and speaking with an indian accent is indian
		Being generous is Indian
		Conflating indian with hindu and hindi
		difference between Indian and Indian American
		Embodiment or enactment of SAAness
		Hindu is Indian
		indian accent
		Indian accent makes you Indian
		Indian American
57		**Indian food**
		Traditional Gujarati food
		Language is SAA
		meaning of Indian identity
		Name is part of being an indian
		SAA food
		SAA stereotypes
		SAA subculture
		Talking with an Indian accent is indian
		There are no shared cultural reference in language between Americans & SAAs
		there should be a balance between being American and SAA
58	45	**what it means to be Parsi**
		Parsi
		Parsi food

			Parsi identity
			Parsi is Indian
			Parsi means wearing particular clothing
			Zoroastrian religious celebrations (Nodes)
			Zoroastrian religious practices
59	16	5	**Intragroup SAA relations**
			different types of indians
			giving back to the SAA community
			Mala, person from the same race, treated her badly
			Malayali culture is different from Indian culture
			Malu johnny
			SAA children's relationship with parents
			south indians vs north indians
60	14		**indian culture**
			I do things culturally because it is Indian tradition
			Indian culture is Indian Holidays
			Indian culture is religious celebrations
			Indian culture is SAA culture
			Indian culture is traditional
			indian dance
			Indian Dance is Indian culture
			Malayali culture is different from Indian culture
61	23		**Pride in SAA racial identity**
			Brahmin identity
			Priest family
			Proud to be indian
			Pride in Indian ancestry and heritage
			SCHOOL
62	36		**school as site of racialization**
			are you black~
			Persis' son hated school
			racialization at school
			Racialized school experience
			what did it mean to Gallifrey to be called black
63	37		**School as site of racism**
			"Who let the colored folk in~"
			bullied at school due to race
			children were not racist
			Gallifrey expected to represent India in class
			racism at school
			Racist incidents in school buses
			racist school administration
			school did not do much about the bullying
			Students are not racist
			Students are racist
			Teachers are not racist
			Teachers are racist
64			**Typecast as a troublemaker at school is racism**

		being a class clown
		comparison between John and gallifrey
		Troublemaker at school by bringing up racial issues
65	39	**social network**
		friends
66		**Gallifrey didn't have any place to go because he did not eat meat**
		Gallifrey started eating meat
		Gallifrey enjoys eating meat
		Gharba cultural celebrations are a chance to socialize with other SAAs
		Gnana's husband doesn't have friends here in the US
		No close social network
		Only want to hang out with SAAs
		SAA friends
		SAA organizations
		SAA organizations and events at PSU
		SAA social network
		Separating American and SAA friends
		Survival instinct to take on the responsibility to be inclusive
		want more than indian or SAA friends
		Want more than SAA friends because America is diverse
		wanting SAA friends
		White friends
67	40	**The other or different**
		Gharba is different
		Minorities moving in
		Not American
68		**the other because of not eating meat**
		the other due to religious practices
		the other due to skin color
69	41	**Tradition-modernity trope**
		Tradition or traditionally
		traditional indian parents
		traditional indian vs liberal American
		Traditional SAA parents vs progressive SAA parents
		Traditionally American
		Traditionally SA
70		WHITE
71	46	**what it means to be white**
		daughter has changed working with white Americans
		Not using the word white
		Rednecks
		Reluctance to use the word white
72	22	**predominantly white**
		I am different because I am Indian, not white
		I feel like I'm in Long Island
		Lack of diversity

|		
		only colored people in town or block
		Persis' son hated school once he moved to Summer
		predominantly white town leads to racialization
		realization that i am indian as a response to an all white environment
73		Aryans
		Background data
		Age
		American citizen
		Black
		Country of origin
		Ethnicity
		Place of birth
		Where I live
		Coding for discourses
74		EAST-WEST DIVIDE
	9	Enjoyment
		Gallifrey enjoys eating meat
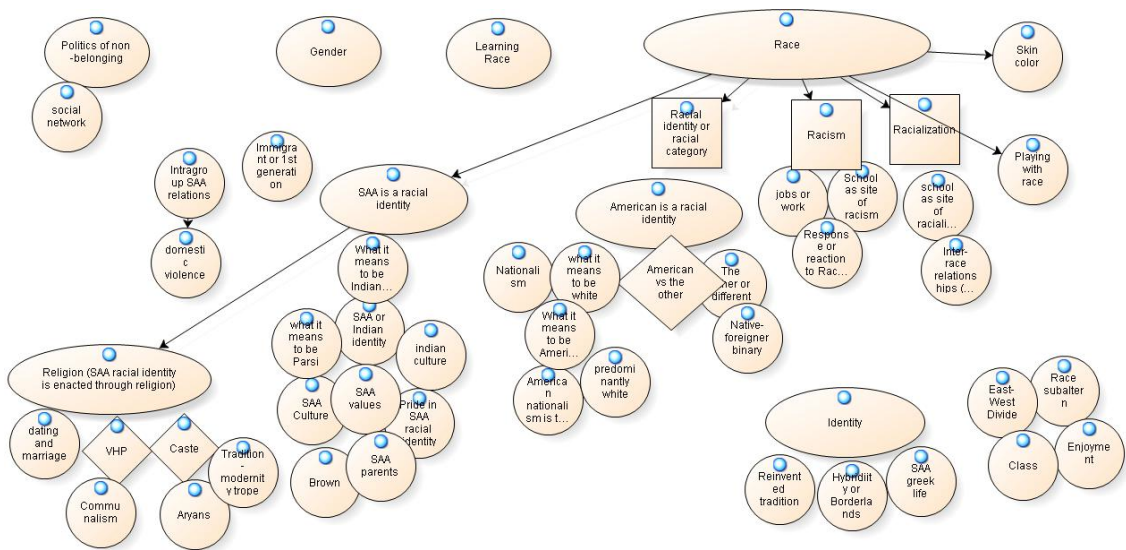
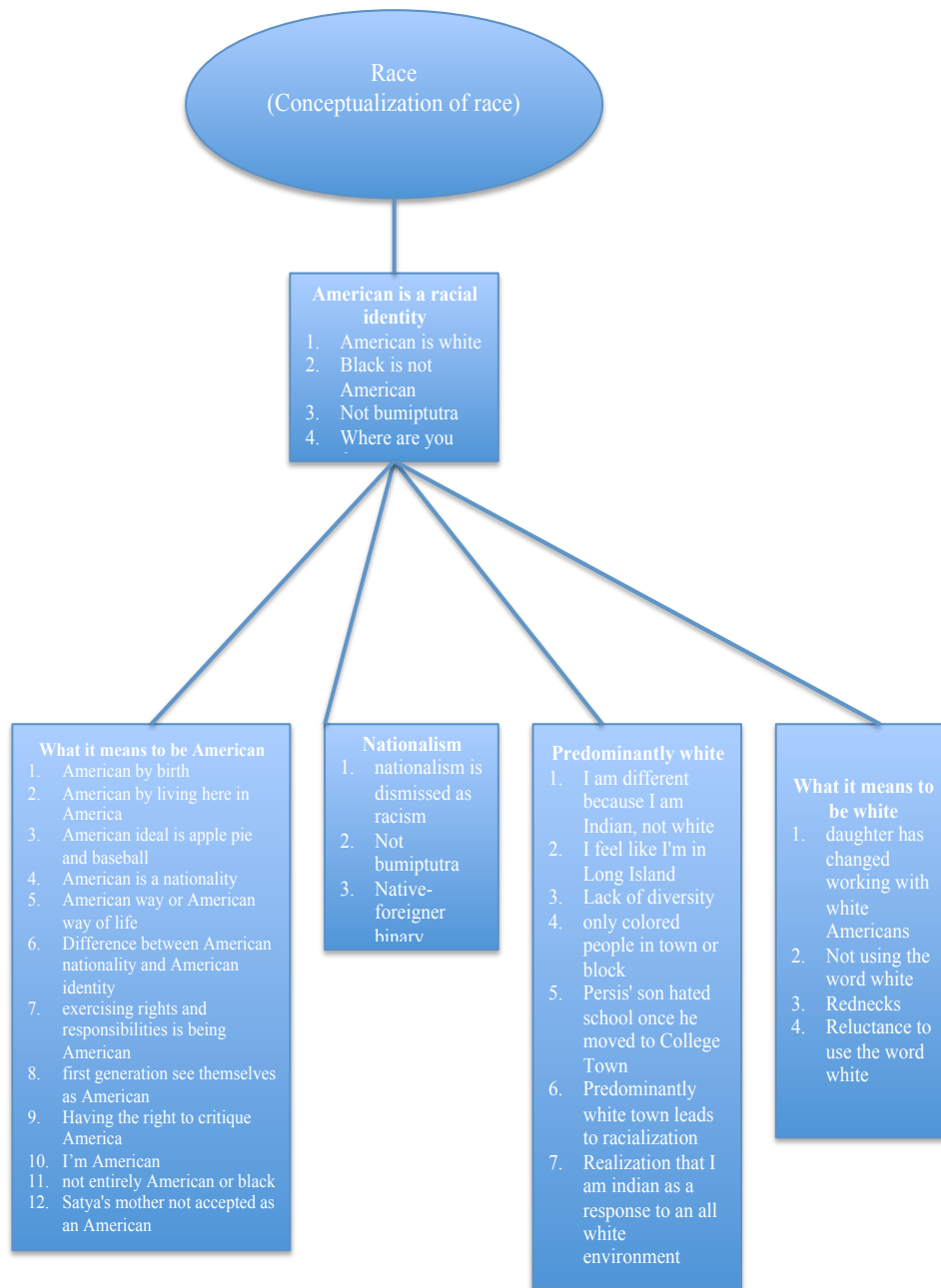Figure C-1: Modeling of the themes.

Figure C-2: Conceptualization of race theme with its subthemes.

VITA

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