

CHOOSING “DESI”:  
EXPLORING THE NEW SECOND GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY

By

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## ABSTRACT

### CHOOSING “DESI” EXPLORING THE NEW SECOND GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By Ali Razzak Chaudhary

This thesis is a qualitative exploration of “new second generation” South Asian Americans. Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou’s concept of the “1.5 generation” and “new second generation” illustrate a diverse and understudied demographic population that highlights the complexities of immigrant assimilation in the United States. The South Asian American population, represents an understudied population that is often left out of the majority of literature pertaining to immigration, race/ethnicity, and general sociology. This research aims to provide a historical and contemporary exploration of the South Asian American community within the United States. In addition to the primary data, a historical discussion of “three epochs” of South Asian immigration is presented as a context in order to appreciate the lived experiences of contemporary 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. Participants in this study were found using a snowball sample conducted in Southern California in the winter of 2008/2009. The participant interviews lasted from thirty minutes to two hours. The participant stories serve to illustrate and highlight many of the dynamics of assimilation, pan-ethnic identity formation and the effects of post 9/11 xenophobia and discrimination. Also discussed are a variety of concepts stemming from the two main themes that arose from the interviews. First, the concept of segmented assimilation is discussed with consideration of the impact of the participants’ and their parents’ social

networks on their self-perceptions and identities. Secondly, the concept of pan-ethnicity is discussed, with consideration of how 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans' views and opinions differ quite substantially from those of their immigrant parents. Finally, the participants' views are discussed pertaining to discrimination and U.S. foreign policy in South Asia.

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## PREFACE

In many ways this project unofficially commenced several years ago, as a result of curiosities sparked by my experiences as an undergraduate sociology student. Due to the fact that my presence in the United States is a direct result of post 1965 South Asian immigration, I have been very interested in the dynamics and lived experiences of South Asian immigrants and their children. As a child I was immersed in the Southern California Indian/Pakistani community that resulted in an important part of my overall identity. As I traveled through adolescence and young adulthood, I encountered many pressures to assimilate and adapt customs and rituals that were more representative of Southern California rather than South Asia. Like many other 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants, I found myself opting to drop many of the South Asian cultural aspects that differentiated me from other Southern Californians. Due to the large presence of African American and Latinos in my surrounding environment, I often tended to culturally identify with these larger ethnic groups. Experiences such as these have contributed to my research interests concerning assimilation and the new second generation.

As young social scientist, I have often felt puzzled with regards to the absence of South Asians within the general academic discourse on immigration, race and ethnicity. Furthermore, the label of Asian-American has never fully captured the nuances of the South Asian experience in America. The various differences between East and South Asian Americans have been further exacerbated following the events of 9/11 and the racialization of Muslims and Muslim-looking groups in the United States. In the early

21<sup>st</sup> century the cultural, racial, linguistic and religious differences between East Asians (Japan, China Korea) and South Asians (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh) are more evident now than at any time before. The divergent differences between these two umbrella terms are in some ways the impetus for this research. Although we can clearly find several similarities between all Asian immigrants, my personal experiences coupled with the lived experiences of South Asian immigrants in the post 9/11 era have prompted me to utilize this thesis as a space to further explore the intricacies of assimilation and identity among the children of South Asian immigrants. This exploration serves as a small glimpse into an immigrant community that is ideal for a variety of future interdisciplinary research endeavors.

In addition, this work has also been influenced by the scholarship and publications of social scientists who are equally concerned with the challenges and complexities of immigrations and assimilation. In particular, this research has been in many ways guided by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's (1993) concept of the "new second generation" and segmented assimilation. With respect to 1.5 and second generation immigrant identity, this research has also been influenced by Dina Okamoto's (2003) research on Asian-American Pan-Ethnicity. Ultimately this research seeks to explore and interpret the aforementioned scholars' work in relation to South Asian Americans.

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## INTRODUCTION

By their votes in the most recent elections, the American people have reaffirmed America's traditional place as a Nation of immigrants. We all are either immigrants, came here as immigrants, or have immigrant parents or grandparents. We are not anti-immigrant. We are not racist. We understand people seeking a better life for their children and grandchildren as naturally as we do (Senator Patrick Leahy 2007, Hearing on Comprehensive Immigration Reform).

What do we want to ask of immigrants who want to become Americans? We should prefer those who come here to invest themselves in this country as well as in their own ambitions. We should prefer those who invest in learning our language, culture and politics. And we should expect that they will not only be law abiding, but culture abiding-that is they will respect and honor the cultural elements of American society, as well as expected that their cultural views will be respected (Dr. Renshon 2007, Hearing on Comprehensive Immigration Reform).

The two statements above represent two sides of a capricious coin that centers on opposing arguments regarding immigration, assimilation, amnesty and security. The comments above were taken from the printed record of the highly publicized 2007 Congressional Comprehensive Immigration Reform Hearings. The political urgency behind the hearings were in large part a result of the massive public demonstrations that engulfed several U.S. cities in 2006. The largest of these demonstrations was the 2006 Los Angeles "May 1<sup>st</sup>/Primero de Mayo" immigration protests which illuminated the diverse and urgent issues pertaining to immigration policies, "enforcement vs. amnesty" and immigrant assimilation. The two quotes represent two conflicting historical themes that have often emerged in immigration reform rhetoric. The first theme relates to the

symbolic recognition of the United States as a welcoming pluralist society coined in Senator Leahy's remarks regarding a "nation of immigrants." The second theme often concerns the role of immigrant assimilation and what constitutes an official or proper "American culture." This theme is often accompanied with xenophobia and prejudice that challenges the loyalty and legitimacy of non-European cultures within American society. Historical as well as contemporary trends of anti-immigrant sentiment employed by conservative pundits insist on immigrant groups to adopt purely American "cultural values" and ideals. The xenophobic gestures illustrate the conflicting complexities and controversies surrounding immigrant assimilation as well as the prevailing political interpretations of American pluralism. When considering the contemporary debates surrounding immigrant assimilation, we are immediately confronted with several structural and cultural factors that pose serious implications for a variety of trajectories in immigrant assimilation. With respect to the effects of racial and cultural differences, immigrant assimilation is often dependent on U.S. categorizations and hierarchies of cultures and races. So the manner in which Jewish or Irish immigrants "fit in" and assimilate is often very different from the experiences of West Indian, Mexican or South Asian immigrants. The role of race and ethnicity within predominately Judeo-Christian societies can pose several additional intersectional inequalities that are often exacerbated when religious and cultural hegemonies are challenged.

With regards to immigrant groups such as Muslims or Hindus, who follow religious and cultural practices that lie outside established Western Judeo-Christian

norms, several challenges and inequalities arise that highlight contemporary instances where religious or cultural differences outweigh the traditional obstacles posed by race or gender. (Madood 2002). When we consider the lived experiences of South Asian Americans in particular, we are immediately confronted with certain social inequalities surrounding the intersections of religion, race and gender that have not always been characteristic of many European immigrant groups. Despite several historical similarities between East Asian and South Asian immigration to the United States, the contemporary xenophobia following the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy has ushered in a new era for South Asian assimilation that is quite different compared to predominately Christian Asian groups such as Koreans or Chinese Americans (Park 2008, Das Gupta 2006). Despite the contemporary nature of the issues facing South Asian Americans, it should be noted that historically many Asian American immigrant groups have experienced similar instances of xenophobia and discrimination in times of war or economic instability. This latest case involving Muslims and South Asian Americans is only a continuation of macro as well as micro interpersonal discriminatory practices that have historically been detrimental to most Asian immigrants in the United States.

The evolving narratives concerning immigration and assimilation in the United States have also centered on complex relationships between economics, race, religion and the Federal government. For instance, South Asian immigration has encountered three distinct periods or epochs that illustrate the group's public transformation from agricultural laborers, to model minorities and finally to designated "others." The various

factors that have affected the transformation of South Asian Americans in mainstream American society have often revolved around issues pertaining to immigration policy. In the context of contemporary immigration laws, there are many challenges and barriers facing current and future South Asian immigrants including the reinstatement of racial, ethnic, and religious based immigration policies designed to control and limit some migrations to the United States (Tumlin 2004). Due to the large numbers of South Asian Muslims in America, this new era of immigration reform directly affects a large subsection within the South Asian American community.

### South Asian Americans

Despite the underrepresentation of South Asians within general immigration research, the last two years have witnessed a surge of media attention directed towards the nations of South Asia. In addition to the eight year war in Afghanistan, growing instability in Pakistan coupled with the 2008 Mumbai Attacks have catapulted South Asian affairs into the mainstream news headlines. Renewed U.S. interests in South Asia are also illustrated by President Barack Obama's appointment of Richard Holbrooke to serve as the Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition to the increasing attention given to South Asia with regards to geo-political terrorism and instability, the contemporary moment is also a time where Americans are equally fascinated by South Asian popular culture (Das Gupta 2006). This fascination is best illustrated with the recent media frenzy surrounding the 2009 Oscar award winning film, *Slumdog Millionaire* which follows the lives of Muslim slum children in Mumbai, India.

The U.S. success and popular appeal of *Slumdog Millionaire* further demonstrates the cross cultural flows that have also been recently explored in research addressing cultural hybridity and Punjabi Bangrah music (Hansen 2006, Maria 1999). The increasing U.S. interests in South Asian popular culture as well as U.S./South Asian geo-politics illuminate the need to better understand the nuances and complexities present within the contemporary South Asian American community.

While a relatively small population compared to other American immigrant groups, much of the post-9/11 U.S. immigration debate is aimed symbolically and socially at curtailing and controlling Muslim as well as South Asian immigration (Das Gupta 2006; Maira 2004; Tumlin 2004). Historically speaking, social and behavioral scientific research addressing immigration, assimilation, identity, and multiculturalism has often overlooked the South Asian American community. Fortunately, the past decade has witnessed a renewed scholarly interest in South Asian and Muslim communities in Western nations such as Great Britain and the United States (Sirin & Fine 2008; Das Gupta 2006; Madood 2002; Maira 2004.).

The dynamic experiences of contemporary South Asian American communities are illustrated in the historical events that characterize the nature of South Asian immigration to the United States. Furthermore, the history and contemporary relationships between South Asian immigrant communities and the United States illustrate the tortuous notions of assimilation and social mobility that are characteristic of several immigrant groups' experiences in America. Although diasporic portrayals of

South Asian or Indian immigration have been scholarly examined within the context of former British colonies or Commonwealth nations (Madood 2002; Munashinghe 2001; Cohen 1997), a number of South Asian scholars have recently examined the particular nuances and lived experiences of South Asian immigrants in the United States (Narayan & Purkayastha 2009; Das Gupta 2006; Warikoo 2004; Maira 2004). The study of these immigrants and the generations to follow provides fresh and challenging insights into the tumultuous relationships between South Asian immigrants and the United States.

Within the South Asian American community, the children of South Asian immigrants who arrived after 1965 make up a demographic population that Portes and Zhou (1993) refer to as the “new second generation” In addition to second generation Americans who are born in the United States to foreign born immigrant parents, the “new second generation” also includes children of immigrants who were born in their parents’ country of origin but were raised predominately in the United States. These individuals are referred to as the 1.5 generation and have been the subject of recent immigrant assimilation research (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters 2004; Lee 2004; Warikoo 2004 ). The “new second generation” South Asian Americans including both 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Americans are the focus of this research project.

## Scope of Work

This project consists of a qualitative exploration that seeks to understand the complex lives of “new second generation” South Asian Americans. A total of eight participants were interviewed and asked a series of questions pertaining to class/occupational classes, identity negotiation, and discrimination. The interviewees were located utilizing a snowball sample that was conducted in Southern California in the winter of 2008-2009. After analyzing transcript data with Nvivo qualitative software, the main themes to emerge from the research included segmented assimilation, pan-ethnic identity, post 9/11 discrimination, and support for U.S. foreign policy goals in South Asia. The results of this limited exploration further illustrate the rich and diverse dynamics of South Asian Americans and their experiences as “new second generation” Americans. The project concludes with a number of suggestions regarding South Asian Americans and the critical need for further social scientific research. In order to fully appreciate the experiences of contemporary “new second generation” South Asian Americans we will now turn to a brief history of South Asian immigration to the United States. This historical background will serve as the context from which to understand the dynamics at play in the contemporary moment.

## BACKGROUND

In order to fully appreciate the complexities of contemporary 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans it will be beneficial to briefly examine the history of South Asians in America. Like several other immigrant groups such as the Chinese, German, Irish and others, etc, the history of South Asian Americans follows a tumultuous path riddled with episodes of success and setbacks. When observing the segmented nature of assimilation that is evident within the contemporary South Asian American community, we find several trajectories that are illustrated in the ethnography of the “new” second generation. The “*new second generation*” as defined by Portes and Zhou (1993), is a tremendous consortium of young men and women whose lives illuminate a host of challenges and concerns that are of increasing importance within scholarly, political and policy circles. The dynamics of contemporary 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations are better understood in the context of three epochs of South Asian immigration to the United States.

### The First Epoch: South Asian Immigration 1820-1924

The First epoch of South Asian immigration to the United States is meant to designate the initial migration of South Asians to North America. The terms South Asian and Indian will be used interchangeably in the following discussion for the time span I

refer to as the 1st epoch due to the colonization of the entire Sub-Continent. The pre-partition era consisted of a single British India, which made Indian the primary ethnic category for designating South Asians until Indian Independence.

The majority of South Asian immigration occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Das Gupta 2006, Jensen 1988). Census documents have recorded “Asian” Indians in the United States as early as 1820 (Das Gupta 2006, Leonard 1992, Jensen 1988, Gonzales 1986). This initial wave of immigration was largely characterized by a period of heightened xenophobia against Asian communities and a contradictory definitions within the emerging system of racial classification in the United States. In the case of mid 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century America, economic factors influenced the migrations of many South Asians. The primary Indian ethnic groups to initially immigrate to the United States were Sikhs. Sikhs, who are a religious and cultural minority in India, were primarily agricultural workers in the Indian province of Punjab. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the West Coast of the United States was burgeoning with development and economic opportunities. Newly developed fishing industries, railroads, and agriculture demanded substantial cheap labor just as the largely agricultural regions of Punjab, India were experiencing drought and famine in the late 1800’s (Shukla 2003, Gonzales 1986). The detrimental economic realities in the Indian province of Punjab coupled with the similar climates, further propelled large numbers of Punjabi Sikhs to immigrate to regions where agriculture and economic opportunity flourished.

Many of these initial Indian immigrants came to California, Oregon and Washington in search of agricultural labor opportunities. There were also a number of South Asian immigrants who came to America for academic, business and religious purposes (Shukla 2003). Although academics often refer to globalization as a recent phenomenon related to “late-capitalism,” late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century dynamics between India and the United States contained many of the trademarks of the modern globalized world such as transnational labor migrations and cultural connectivity.

The majority of South Asian immigration tended to take place in the western states where large communities of Chinese and Japanese immigrants already existed. Much like their Asian counterparts, South Asian immigrants experienced many negative setbacks resulting from their racialization and categorization as foreigners who were threatening the economic prosperity of U.S. born whites (Shukla 2003, Daniels 1989, Gonzales 1986). South Asian immigrants, along with larger populations of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, were often xenophobically perceived as the sources of America’s deteriorating moral fabric. All Asian groups soon found themselves as scapegoats for rising unemployment and the economic misfortunes experienced by native white citizens.

*Asian Exclusion Act.* Efforts to specifically curb South Asian immigration were finally realized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the passing of the Asian Indian Exclusion Act/Asiatic Barred Zone of 1917, followed by the Immigration Act of 1924 which barred all Asian immigration. Although the acts were designed to limit the immigration of all groups who were deemed unworthy of American citizenship, the ethnic and regional

focus was clearly directed towards Asian immigrants in particular (Das Gupta 2006, Snipp 2003, Gonzales 1986). General American attitudes towards immigration are illustrated in the conflicts and contradictions that emerged surrounding issues pertaining to the biological categorization and “natural” hierarchy of races. Ironically, Indian immigrants, regardless of religious affiliation, posed some of the most contradictory arguments against the science behind American conceptions of race. These contradictions would eventually set precedence for popular re-interpretations of racial hierarchies. (Das Gupta 2006, Warikoo 2004)

The convoluted ways in which racial, ethnic and class categorizations impacted South Asian immigrants is a subject to which contemporary scholars of immigration and race/ethnicity must pay close attention. In the first era of mass migration to the United States, the scientific explanations for a racial hierarchy were becoming firmly embedded in the institutions of government as well as in dominant popular opinion. The arguments over race and citizenship were presented in a series of important court cases in which racial hierarchy was systematically utilized to justify the non-citizen status of immigrants who were considered racially not “white” (Zinn 1980). The predominate system of racial categorization that consisted of Aryan, Negro and Oriental did not accommodate “brown” South Asians who were physically quite different from Far East Asians, Africans and whites. Furthermore, the British system of classification in India had relied on a dichotomy of *Aryan* versus *non-Aryan* to identify the multiple ethnicities within Colonial India. The Aryan ancestral lineages for Punjabi Indian immigrants in America generated a

host of anthropological and biological challenges for the Federal government's hierarchy of races (Das Gupta 2006). The complications surrounding this problem were eventually addressed with the pivotal court ruling against Bhagat Singh Tindh in 1923.

*The Case of Bhagat Singh Tindh.* Bhagat Singh Tindh, an immigrant from India, lived in the United States for over nine years. He fought in the U.S. Army during World War I and applied for citizenship from the state of Oregon (Das Gupta 2006, Shukla 2003). Despite several cases of the government denying citizenship to other East Asians (Japanese and Chinese), Tindh was convinced that his "Aryan" Indian ancestry made him separate from the East Asian populations who were being "denaturalized" by recent anti-Asian legislations. Unfortunately in 1923, he was ultimately denied citizenship, on popular "phenotypic" definitions of his South Asian ancestry. *"In the landmark case, the Supreme Court decided against Tindh, saying that although Indians were considered by academic authorities to be Aryan, and thus synonymous with Caucasians, they were not 'white' according to popular meaning in the understanding of the common man (Shukla 2003:36).* The Tindh case serves as a testament to the racialization that accompanied the Indian immigrant experience in America (Jensen 1988). In the decades since the Tindh case, South Asian racial classification still manages to remain quite precarious and convoluted.

*Black-White Framework.* Within the Black-White Framework of American society, South Asians were racialized as a group that was neither white nor black. Finding themselves without a distinct racial category posed several issues for these immigrants

with regards to patterns of assimilation. Whereas white European immigrants were able to assimilate generally after three or four generations, the early Indian immigrants found their assimilation patterns to be consistent with what theorists would later refer to as the racial/ethnic disadvantaged and segmented perspectives of assimilation (Brown & Bean 2006). Despite the “model minority” myths that would characterize South Asians in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is safe to assume that the majority of non-white South Asian immigrants experienced anything but classic straight-line assimilation. With respect to the Punjabi Indian agricultural migrants who settled in California, many immigrants eventually inter-married and assimilated into local Mexican communities (Leonard 1992). With the racial barriers in place against South Asian assimilation into white mainstream America, South Asian communities struggled to survive.

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian immigration began to curtail as the prospects for an Independent India began to emerge. By the time of Indian independence, no more than 4000 Indian migrants remained in the United States, primarily in New York and California (Shukla 2003, Jensen 1988). Furthermore, many Indians who had been deprived of citizenship rights were also subject to Alien Land Laws where by scores of migrants lost their land as well as other investments (Jensen 1988). These negative setbacks in the United States manifested themselves in the steady flow of Indian immigrants returning back to India in the following years. Later, in the midst of the Post World War II period, the U.S. government began to ease South Asian immigration by granting naturalization to some South Asian immigrants while installing a strict quota of

accepting only 100 Indian immigrants per year (Shukla 2003). In the entire period between 1946 and 1964, only 7,629 South Asians immigrated to the United States (Shukla 2003, Xenos, Barringer & Levin 1989). Although the pre-1965 era of South Asian immigration was embedded in collective cultural notions of “Indianness,” the religious and ethnic differences among South Asian migrants, which had been forced into the background by colonization and strict racial categorization, would be dramatically re-affirmed in the Post-Indian Independence migrations. Furthermore, with the partitioning of India and the emergence of Pakistan and Bangladesh, a dramatic surge of nationalism coupled with religious fervor swept through communities and in many cases followed migrants as they immigrated and forged new communities tied to national identities in America. Despite the increasing ethnic, religious and national distinctions among South Asian immigrants, their collective experiences in the United States were still tied to the legacies of racial hierarchy and arbitrary ethnic categorizations.

#### The Second Epoch: South Asian Immigration 1952-2000

With regards to scholarly writings on South Asian and Indian immigration, the post-1965 era or wave of immigration is often the central time period of focus. Reforms to the earlier prohibitory immigration laws began in 1952 with the passing of the McCarran-Walter Act, which abolished the 1917 barriers to immigration based solely on Asian ethnicity. Although the act re-opened immigration to Asian nationalities, it maintained a strict quota system for controlling the numbers of Asians allowed to immigrate. The emerging Cold War also necessitated that the United States attract Asian

scientists and intellectuals to aid in the development of scientific and military technologies (Das Gupta 2006, Maira 2004). This atmosphere ushered in a new attitude towards the immigration of highly educated South Asians. While the numbers of South Asians immigrating to the U.S. in the 1950's remained relatively low, large numbers of immigrants would soon follow in the following decades resulting from the removal of immigrant quotas.

A healthy economy coupled with a political agenda influence by the Civil Rights movement, brought the passing of the 1965 Immigration Act which removed immigrant quotas based on nationality or ethnicity. On the surface, the Immigration Act sought to eliminate any hint of racial prejudice in policy by creating a new standard for admission (Olzak & Shanahan 2002). In retrospect, the Act was meant to open up the United States to more immigration, but to do so in a way that would allow the government to control entries and reduce illegal immigration (Sassen 1998). In place of the prior designated quota system, the new bill favored certain aspects of immigration such as family reunification, refugee relief and prospective foreign professionals whose skills may benefit the United States (Maira 2004). By 1970, Indians as well as other South Asian immigrants subsequently found themselves in an increasingly diverse and concentrated urban population that was highly stratified by race, ethnicity and class. The South Asian immigrant population jumped from 1,973 between the years of 1951 and 1960 to 27,189 between 1961 and 1970 (Das Gupta 2006, Gall & Gall 1993). Once again, South Asians

and their status in the racial hierarchy, as defined by the Federal government, would again become a central issue of debate and redress.

Many of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the post 1965 South Asian immigrants are quite different from the conditions and contextual experiences of earlier Indian immigrants. Interestingly enough, a degree of disconnection existed between the aforementioned agricultural Punjabi Indian immigrants and the newer urban and upwardly mobile post-1965 South Asian immigrants. One of the clearest differences between the second epoch of South Asian immigration and the earlier Indian immigrants is class standings and overall levels of educational attainment (Das Gupta 2006; Shukla 2003; Prashad 2000; Jensen 1988). The differences in human and social capital amongst the two immigrant epochs also profoundly shaped their respective experiences with assimilation. In a study of Indian immigrants in America, Parmatma Saran (1985) provides several demographic statistics regarding the more recent Indian immigrants residing in New York City. Saran writes,

In terms of demographic characteristics, we find that the immigrant Indian community is relatively young, the majority of them coming from urban and upper caste backgrounds in India. The most unique characteristic of this population is the high level of educational and professional attainment. Its average income level is high, more than 50 percent live in their own homes, and they are savings and investment oriented (Saran 1985:46).

The emphasis on educational attainment described by Saran (1985) clearly illustrates the differences in social capital characteristic of the second epoch of South Asian immigrants compared to the agriculturally oriented earlier immigrants. In the mid

1970's, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reports showed that Indians were one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States, thus adding a new characteristic to America's ethnic heterogeneous society (Saran 1985). Many of these initial post 1965 immigrants attempted to follow Milton Gordon's (1964) notion of a *classic* assimilation model where by immigrants experience a "straight line" assimilation path through cultural, structural and marital assimilations. As the numbers of Indians as well as other South Asian immigrants increased, so did their political and social agendas that soon began to refocus energy on the decades old dilemmas of racial categorization and notions of "whiteness."

Ironically, when the 1970 census was taken, South Asians found themselves racially classified as "white." The decades of non-white status following the Tindh case were overturned instantly with this new categorization (Das Gupta 2006). The "white" census categorization was problematic for newly arriving Indians and other South Asian immigrants due to their inability as a group to be protected by the recent Civil Rights legislations. After failing to be recognized as an ethnic minority group while simultaneously encountering high levels of racial discrimination and xenophobia, the American Indian Association (AIA) went into action. In the mid 1970's, the AIA began to pressure congress to re-categorize Indians along with other Asian ethnicities under the racialized category of Asian-American (Das Gupta 2006; Shukla 2003; Saran 1985).

The problems from the 1970 census had also prompted the government to hold hearings on how to address the challenges posed by the increasingly diversified American

population in the aftermath of the liberalization of immigration policies following the 1965 amendment. After several months of debates and hearings, the Office of Management and Budget issued Directive No.15, which created a new five-category racial classification system (Snipp 2003). The directive essentially made two dramatic changes to the census as it was presented in 1970. First, the prior racial categorization system was transformed into five categories consisting of (1) American Indians/Alaskan native, (2), Asian and Pacific Islander, (3) non-Hispanic Blacks, (4) non-Hispanic Whites, and (5) Hispanics. In addition to the five category racial system, the directive also incorporated a section for ethnic ancestry in which the term Asian Indian appeared as a result of the pressure exhibited by the American Indian Association. Although, the American Indian Association considered their organized challenges to the census process a success, it is not clear whether or not the group incorporated the opinions and views of other South Asian immigrants from nations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. Additionally, there were many critiques and complications that resulted from the new five-category system of classification. *“In particular, the directive glossed over the diversity within Asian and Hispanic populations, and among Indian tribes, and it tended to reify racial categories in a way that made them appear immutable and impermeable”*(Snipp 2003:573). Snipp’s comments capture the emerging complications arising from the updated census classification system for a variety of ethnicities that would see their varying cultural characteristics bundled into five overarching racialized categories.

*Non-Indian South Asian Immigrants.* With respect to non-Indian South Asian immigrants, the category of Asian Indian created several other issues. Unlike subcategories such as “Chinese” or “Korean”, which referred to national identity, “Asian Indian” was supposed to allude to immigrants from all South Asian nations and the Diaspora. It failed to act as a transnational term because it repeated India’s geopolitical hegemony in the region (Das Gupta 2006). Many South Asian immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka continued to be undercounted in census figures due to their reluctance to mark Asian Indian as their designated race or ethnicity. The efforts of the AIA to locate Indian immigrants under the racialized label of Asian-American further exasperated relations between South Asian immigrant communities, African Americans and Latinos (Das Gupta 2006). Many of the actions on the part of the AIA signaled that mainstream Indian immigrants, although privileged in class and educational status, were not immune to cultural or race based discrimination. Although national differences were some of the most opposing characteristics within the post 1965 South Asian immigrant community, the majority of these early immigrants had similar class and educational backgrounds.

### The Third Epoch: South Asian Immigration 2001-Present

The “new second generation”, as defined by Kasintz, Mollenkopf & Waters (2004), has in many ways begun to come of age in the early 21st century. The “new second generation”, refers to the children of the immigrants who arrived following the 1965 reforms in immigration policy (Portes & Zhou 1993). Within the “new second

generation” the term “1.5” has also gained acceptance in recent years to serve as a designation for children of immigrants who were born in the home country but substantially raised in the United States. Together, these 1.5 generation Americans and their U.S. born 2<sup>nd</sup> generation counterparts comprise what I will refer to as “the new second generation.” The collective experiences of all 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrant communities are in many ways affected by the debates and arguments over immigration in the United States.

The turbulence of the contemporary moment is marked with global economic instability, religious fundamentalists, and massive human migrations. Domestically, the issues and debates surrounding immigration and immigrants continue to dominate much political and policy discourse. The close proximity between security and immigration once again reflects the historical will of the United States government to control and perhaps eliminate immigration flows into the country. In the years following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, currents of xenophobia motivated by notions of national security and terrorism have dramatically reshaped the nature of contemporary U.S. immigration. In the case of the South Asian American community, the emphasis of government policies designed to target Muslims and sometimes Hindu fundamentalists have highlighted religious and cultural differences within South Asian communities both at home and abroad. Although these differences may be routinely expressed in the sub-continent and among the first arrivals, many of the younger 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians tend not to harbor the same divisive feelings towards one another (Das Gupta 2006, Narayan

& Purkayastha 2009). The third epoch of South Asian immigration is compounded by a number of macro factors including the current economic meltdown of the world economy, U.S. foreign policy coupled with rising nationalisms in South Asian nations, and finally, the restructuring of U.S. immigration policy and Homeland Security.

In the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, South Asian immigrants as well as other Muslim associated ethnicities found themselves in a precarious and highly volatile situation (Sirin & Fine 2008, Maira 2004). The pressures resulting from the ensuing Islamophobia consisted of a variety of circumstances and contexts. Following 9/11, several Muslim as well as Hindu and Sikh individuals encountered a dramatic increase in discrimination and prejudice in typically safe environments such as school, work and shopping mall (Bayoumi 2008, Sirin & Fine 2008). Due to the stereotypical media as well as some academic portrays of Islam and its inherent tendencies towards terrorism, many Muslim as well as non-Muslim South Asian experienced a new wave of xenophobia and discrimination following September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (Das Gupta 2006, Maria 2004)

In their article concerning the effects of Islamophobia on Muslim Americans in general, Bakalian and Bozorgmehr (2005) interpret the common dimensions of the scapegoating and popular backlash against American Muslims or Muslim looking people following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

First members of the majority population may engage in scapegoating of the targeted population (i.e. acts of intimidation, harassment, verbal abuse, and physical violence against persons and/or property). Second, pre-existing, or newly created, negative

stereotypes of the targeted group(s), propagated in the media, often fuel the actions of the hatemongers. Third, the state responds to perceived threats to the nation's security and sovereignty by targeting members of ethnic or religious groups for scrutiny and repression. Government reprisals in American history have included internment, detention, deportation, mandatory identification cards, surveillance and prosecution. While the state may not condone citizens' vigilante actions, its own policies are likely to send a different message (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr 2005:7).

The effects of this anti-Muslim backlash affect immigrant populations in several different ways. Of the vast diversity of ethnicities that make up the American Muslim population, many South Asians including Hindus, Christians and Sikhs have often been mistakenly the targets of anti-Muslim discrimination. Bakalian & Bozorgmehr's third aspect (2005) involving the role of the State is a reoccurring, though ratcheted up, development in this third epoch of South Asian immigration. Although currents of xenophobia accompanying the implementation of laws restricting immigration and citizenship are not a new phenomenon, the immigration reforms following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks mark the first time since 1965 that written laws and policies have been introduced and passed that make distinctions based on religious and ethnic backgrounds (Tumlin 2004). In addition, after eliminating the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Federal government has created a new two part division within the Department of Homeland Security (D.H.S.) designed to handle all aspects of immigration including customs and border enforcement (Tumlin 2004). Similar to the atmosphere in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see a return to government control over the demographic characteristics of incoming immigrants.

Another important distinction of this new era of immigration is the return of Federal immigration policies that evaluate immigrants on the basis of national origin, ethnicity and religious backgrounds. This form of racial, ethnic and religious profiling is referred to by Tumlin (2004) as “Immigrant-Plus Profiling” and has many policy implications that are reminiscent of immigration laws preceding 1965. In particular, the DHS seems to have created an alternate set of policies for immigrants and non-citizens who originate from Muslim majority nations dubbed by the DHS as “Al-Queada Nations.” These alternative policies include special registration for all immigrants originating from 24 listed Muslim majority countries, a high degree of secrecy used in DHS investigation of immigrants, and an increased level of scrutiny placed on asylum seekers migrating from designated “Al-Queada” nations. The changes in policies concerning asylum seekers is especially troubling given the prior historical instances of good will exhibited by the U.S. government towards refugees of wars and conflict (Rumbaut 1994). By instilling a “suspect first” orientation to immigration policy, the United States has regressed in terms of its post-1965 commitments to the eradication of laws and policies based on ethnic and racial distinctions.

One of the most revealing social impacts illustrating the detrimental effects posed by the new immigrations policies is the increasing emphasis placed on religious and cultural differences within South Asian communities. While much of the scholarly focus, as well as mainstream representations of South Asians, tend to emphasize “Indianness” and Hindu spiritual culture, the anti-Muslim backlash following the September 11<sup>th</sup>

attacks have created rifts and divisions between Muslim, Christians, Hindu and Buddhist South Asian communities. In two recent articles concerning the children of South Asian immigrants, the increasing religious divisions between Pakistanis and Indians seem to highlight certain changes regarding notions of pan-ethnicity that have been expressed in the past (Hansen 2006, Maira 2004). Some of these cultural strains in the South Asian community can be attributed to the increased scrutiny and discrimination experienced by South Asian Muslims, primarily Pakistani immigrants. Furthermore, tragic events in the Sub-Continent such as the 2002 massacre of over two-thousand Muslims in the Indian province of Gujarat, the Mumbai Terror Attacks of 2008, and the spillover of the U.S. War on Terror into Pakistan, tend to exasperate religious tensions among the different ethnicities within South Asian communities both here and abroad.

It is ironic that although the overall discourse with regards to South Asian immigrants often emphasizes an Indian collective cultural identity, contemporary popular representations of South Asian immigrants are increasingly racialized and often framed divisively as Muslim versus non-Muslim (Sirin & Fine 2008, Maria 2004, Madood 2002). Although the “model minority” ideology previously discussed in relation to South Asian immigrants may still be viable when conservative pundits highlight upwardly mobile non-Muslim South Asians, such as Dinesh D’Souza or current conservative Republican Governor Piyush “Bobby” Jindal, the third epoch of South Asians in America is fraught with segmented experiences of assimilation illustrated in occupational diversity, notions of pan-ethnicity, religious secularism, and diverse ethnic affiliations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Immigrant Assimilation

How the United States embraces immigrant populations is a subject that has gone through several transformations over the past 250 years. By examining large numbers of European immigration waves during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, social scientists conceptualized a basic model for immigrant assimilation into the United States. This initial model also known as the “classic” model of assimilation, assumes that immigrants will follow a “straight-line” of acculturation to mainstream American values, norms, and behaviors (Brown & Bean 2006, Alba & Nee 2003, Gordon 1964). This straight-line assimilation was often manifested within white European communities who underwent a degree of ethnic consolidation with a racial identification that was in opposition to all non-whites (Olzak & Shanahan 2002). Although this model certainly had a degree of validity pertaining to earlier European immigrants, other theorists found many shortcomings of this model when applied to non-white immigrant groups who dramatically increased their numbers after 1965.

As the numbers of Hispanic, Asian, and Caribbean immigrants steadily increased after the 1965 immigration reforms, many of the established theories on immigrant assimilation failed to be applicable to non-European immigrants. Following the 1965 Immigration Act, new theories emerged which accounted for discrimination and other

barriers to immigrant mobility that prohibited the classic straight-line assimilation (Gordon 1963), which was characteristic of white European immigrants. These emerging assimilation theoretical models are often referred to as the “*racial/ethnic disadvantage models of assimilation*” and have been employed in the classic 1964 writings of Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan (Brown & Bean 2006). By the 1980’s and 1990’s, the large numbers of non-white immigrant groups in the United States were consistently increasing. Many of these groups were considered marginalized and not in line with the classic assimilation models, therefore a notion of a “bumpy” or “segmented” assimilation model began to gain momentum (Portes & Zhou 1993, Gans 1992).

*Segmented Assimilation.* Segmented assimilation refers to the reality that the intergenerational experiences of immigrants are quite diverse and often unable to follow the straight-line trajectory of classic assimilation models employed to interpret the experience of white European immigrants. Portes and Zhou (1993) theorize that structural barriers, such as poor urban schools, limited access to employment and other obstacles are often particularly severe in the cases of the most disadvantaged members of immigrant groups. Such impediments can lead to stagnant or downward mobility, even as the children of other immigrants follow divergent paths toward classic straight-line assimilation (Brown & Bean 2006, Portes & Min Zhou 1993). With respect to the initial South Asian immigrants following the 1965 reforms, we find a high representation of highly educated and upper class individuals who helped fuel the conservative notions of the Asian “model minority.”

*Model Minorities & Affirmative Action.* The upward mobility, as well as the high levels of human and social capital characteristic of the initial post-1965 South Asian immigrants, certainly affected the political agendas of the conservative Right in the following decades. But as we look at the 1980's and 90's we see an occupationally diverse South Asian population that is represented by taxi cab drivers as well as physicians. In the final two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Federal government, under the leadership of Ronald Reagan and the "new" conservatives, began to systematically adjust progressive policies that had been ushered in during the Civil Rights era to address the centuries of past racial inequality and injustice (Das Gupta 2006, Barringer & Kassebaum 1989). Two of the most significant issues to arise during the Reagan years were the efforts to remove Affirmative Action programs and to reform the 1965 immigration policies. With regards to the conservative political agenda of abolishing affirmative action, Asian Americans, including South Asians, were employed as the political leverage needed against the progressive needs of African Americans and Latinos (Barringer & Kassebaum 1989). In many ways, the conservative Right used, generally without their consent, the newly categorized Asian Americans to illustrate the problematic bias inherent in race based affirmative action programs. Furthermore, the model minority rhetoric also served to reinforce classic notions of assimilation often invoked in earlier writings focusing on European immigrants (Alba 1990, Gordon 1964). With respect to Asian or South Asian Americans and conservative notions of the "model minority," the effects and impacts of race, religion and xenophobia towards these groups are often overlooked. As a result of widespread intersectional inequality, Asian

Americans often find themselves experiencing the complexities of Olzak and Shanahan's (2002) notion of *ethnic competition* between immigrant groups and domestic minority groups. Omi and Takagi (1996) discuss the role of Asian Americans in the midst of the political turmoil with regards to affirmative action programs in the University of California's admissions procedures.

“Preferential policies,” victimize Asian Americans, perhaps as much as, perhaps more than whites. Deploying this particular social construction serves an important political purpose. By raising the issue of Asian American victimization, the Right could deflect the charge levied against them by their critics that their opposition to affirmative action represents merely a veiled attempt to preserve white skin privilege. This representation of Asian Americans as disadvantaged by affirmative action plays into popular constructions of Asian Americans as friends of Whites and foes of African Americans (Omi & Takagi 1996:156).

When we look at the effects of the affirmative action debate on South Asian immigrants we find an interesting difference in opinions based on class stratification and human capital. With respect to the upwardly mobile and highly educated South Asian immigrants, we see a mainstream representation of racialized non-white minorities who aspire to achieve the classic straight-line model of assimilation into the dominant American culture. In her analysis of dominant South Asian immigrant culture and its reluctance to incorporate marginalized South Asians such as homosexuals, victims of domestic abuse, and domestic workers, Das Gupta writes,

South Asians were inducted in the U.S. racial order as model minorities, an image that was initially concocted for East Asians. This image of an evenly successful, self-reliant, and almost-white immigrant group helped the first wave of post-1965 immigrants to represent themselves as deserving full citizenship and it continues to appeal to mainstream South Asians (Das Gupta 2006:58).

Although, the majority of initial post-1965 South Asian immigrants tended to

identify and strive to measure up to the notion of a “model minority”, the large numbers of South Asian immigrants entering the United States through family reunification during the 1980’s and 1990’s greatly diversified South Asian immigrant communities. Furthermore, despite the comparative socio-economic statuses of certain individuals within the South Asians community, the twenty year period following 1965 showed that even well educated South Asians were the victims of the “glass ceiling” and other subtle forms of discrimination (Barringer & Kassebaum 1989). What is clear is that even those South Asians who embraced the “model minority” ideology were still often subjected to differential treatment based on phenotypic and cultural differences.

The varying factors of human and social capital within immigrant groups coupled with discrimination, marginalized neighborhoods, and ethnic conflict create the conditions which can lead to segmented assimilation (Fernandez-Kelly & Haller 2005). With regards to the legacy and importance of race in American history, it is clear that racialized non-white immigrant groups are often faced with obstacles that prohibit the types of classic assimilation that are characteristic of early European immigrants. Furthermore, the migrations of Asian and Hispanics throughout the history of the United States have consistently challenged the black/white racial dichotomy. Often the official, as well as popular connotations of who is “white” and who is “black” have been the defining aspects of assimilation for various immigrant groups including South Asians.

*Occupational Classes.* Within the contemporary South Asian immigrant community, we certainly find evidence of segmented assimilation as well as classic straight-line assimilation. Although many mainstream highly educated/specialized South

Asian immigrants tend to champion the “model minority” concept, there are also many South Asians who are working class (Das Gupta 2006, Barringer & Kassebaum 1989, Saran 1985). Furthermore, occupational diversity also contributes to the dynamics of assimilation with regards to subsequent generations (Barringer & Kassebaum 1989). Although many mainstream South Asians are often represented as doctors or engineers, there are increasing numbers of South Asian immigrants who are taxi cab drivers, store clerks, and gas stations attendants (Das Gupta 2006). The experiences of these diverse “occupational classes” can often be illustrated in the dynamics of assimilation such as identity and pan-ethnicity. Occupational classes as explored by Weeden & Grusky (2005) help illustrate the increasing stratification between big classes and occupational classes. When considering the South Asian American population, we find that occupational classes of the parents often influence the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations’ experiences with assimilation and identity. Furthermore, the occupational classes of the immigrant parents will undoubtedly influence the subsequent assimilation and identity formation of the children.

### Ethnic Identity

The Migrations of modern times...have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these. The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture...The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture: it will be complicated sometimes by whatever relations are established with some native race and further by immigration from other than the original source. In this way, peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash appear. - T.S. Elliot 1949 (Bhabha 1996)

Although the sentiment expressed by T.S. Elliot writings are well over fifty years old, it manages to illustrate the complex nature of culture and identity within the “new second generation.” In the case of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans, the complexities and variations in ethnic identities are as varied as the numerous cultures within South Asia. That being said, the many similarities and common lived experiences of the children of South Asian immigrants are equally compelling. In order to better understand the dynamics of immigrant ethnic identity, let us briefly consider some of the relevant scholarship on ethnic identity formation.

Ethnic Identity formation as recently described by Burke, Cerven & Harrod (2009 forthcoming), can be measured by a number of items that are referred to as an “ethnic identity repertoire”. These items can range from “having friends with same ethnic background, to listening to ethnic music, to observing religious traditions associated with ones’ ethnicity.” Identity and how immigrants form an ethnic identity is a subject matter that has been discussed by a number of sociologists and psychologists (Phinney & Ong 2007; Waters 1998; Hall 1997). With respect to immigrant ethnic identity, there are several factors that are influential in identity formation such as family, occupational class, social networks, and language. Phinney and Ong (2007) write,

When immigrants leave one culture and settle in another, they are faced with fundamental questions regarding who they are and who they will become in their new country. Their ethnic identity, that is, their sense of belonging to their culture of origin, is a key factor in the way they adaptively respond to the challenges in their new country. It is therefore important for researchers and practitioners to understand the multiple pathways that lead to the development of a secure ethnic identity, the ways these pathways may change with time, and the factors that influence positive or negative identity outcomes (2007:51).

*Language & Identity Formation.* With language we find one of the primary factors in identity formation. For those children who do not understand their parents' native language, identity formation will assume a different form as opposed to bi-lingual children (Phinney & Ong 2007). The challenges and choices made by the immigrants will undoubtedly affect their children's subsequent encounters with identity formation. When considering the diversity of experiences and opinions with regards to the notion of an ethnic identity we are confronted with issues concerning religion, citizenship as well as race. According to Stuart Hall (1995), identities are never stable, but are continually formed through a process of becoming (Hall 1995:26). Hall's (1995) explanation of the fluidity of identity can create a scenario where individuals identify with multiple identities.

In her work on multiple ethnic identity choices, Mary Waters (1998) describes three types of multiple racial and ethnic identities. Her first type involves people who are of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry where individuals may identify with one, all or none of their ancestries. The second type of multiple racial or ethnic identity concerns those individuals are of unmixed origins but whose origins can be defined in different levels of inclusiveness. "For instance, black immigrants from Jamaica to New York City can identify as Jamaican, West Indian, or black" (Waters 1998:29). The third type of multiple racial or ethnic identities involves individuals who feel free to choose to identify with an ancestry/ethnicity or choose to be just "American" (Waters 1998:29). Waters (1998) continues to explain how the third model of racial or ethnic identity has historically never

been applicable to non-white citizens. The ramifications of race and what constitutes an “American” continue to play themselves out in a variety of immigrant assimilation experiences. The complexities and pressures inherent in the first two types of racial or ethnic identity are representative of the experiences of many non-white immigrant groups. With respect to the children of immigrants we find a host of complexities inherent in the identity negotiations of the “new second generation.”

*Hyphenated-Americans.* Immigrants as well as their children are continually negotiating their identities in a variety of settings and scenarios in everyday life. Often immigrant youth form their identities by gaining membership in collectives groups based on racial, ethnic, or religious background and by negotiating among different cultural frameworks (Sirin & Fine 2008, Suarez-Orozco 2004). Psychologists Selcuk Sirin and Michelle Fine (2008) propose an immigrant acculturation model for their study of Muslim American Youth. The model consists of two independent domains: *(1) the degree to which one is willing to identify with and is allowed to participate in one’s home (e.g. Muslim) culture and the degree to which one is willing to identify with and is allowed to participate in one’s host (e.g. broader U.S.) culture* (Sirin & Fine 2008:121). With respect to the complexities inherent in individual identities it is helpful to employ Sirin and Fine’s (2008) notion of *hyphenated selves* in order to describe the variety of identities within the South Asian American community. Hyphenated selves refer to the various ways in which youths may create and enact their identities when political or social conditions place them in tension (Sirin & Fine 2008). This idea is also beneficial for understanding the ways in which South Asian immigrant youth or the “new second

generation” negotiate, embody, and narrate their multiple selves, at the hyphen, in a fractured world, nation, community, home, or school (Sirin & Fine 2008:123). Various situations may dictate the nature of South Asian identity negotiation at any particular moment. With respect to South Asians, we also find instances where individuals will assume and negotiate pan-ethnic identities that are often situation specific.

### Pan-Ethnic Identities

A pan-ethnic identity or pan-ethnicity derives from the theory put forth by Espiritu and Lopez (1990) that predicts children of Asian immigrant children will react to their common racial labeling by developing a pan-ethnic or pan-Asian American identity (Lee 2004). Dina Okamoto (2003) further explains how the *“layering of ethnic identities enables the expansion and contraction of ethnic boundaries. Ethnic identities based on national-origin boundaries can shift upward to be based on a pan-national boundary”*(p.811). When considering the case of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans we are confronted with many cases where individuals interpret their ethnic boundary to transcend national origin boundaries. Although much of the research looking at Pan-Ethnicity has focused on East Asian ethnicities (Park 2008; Lee 2004; Okamoto 2003), many of the experiences expressed by 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese, Japanese and Korean Americans tend to resemble some of the experiences of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri-Lankan Americans. It is important to note that certain elements such as moral exclusion and anti-Muslim xenophobia pose additional opportunities as well as challenges for South Asian pan-ethnicity within the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

Pan-ethnicity is often influenced by external factors such as social networks, occupational classes, and higher education. Sara Lee (2004) explains how in the case of Koreans in New York City, middle class Asian Americans are more likely than their working or lower class counterparts to develop a pan-Asian American identity because they attend big four year colleges and are exposed to Asian American studies curriculums that stress the shared experiences of assimilation, race and discrimination. For South Asian Americans, although less represented in numbers, higher education environments as well as South Asian popular culture can provide similar spaces for pan-ethnic identities.

#### “Desi & Desis”

Labels, whether they be racial or cultural tend to have a great degree of significance in ethnic identity formation. Although ethnic classification terms such as “South Asian American” or “Asian Indian” are roughly thirty years old, the complexities and multiple manifestations of South Asian identities and ethnic affiliations within Western societies tend to overlap and often transcend traditional national origin boundaries. More recently the uses of terms such as South Asian American, and “Desi,” have contributed to the frequency of misunderstandings one may encounter when exploring South Asian American cultures. The South Asian population in the United States made up of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Sri Lankan and Bhutanese are a collective diasporic group who are also referred to as “Desi”(Oullette 2008, Sharma 2005, Govind 2004, Maira 1999). The term “*Desi*” refers to an Urdu/Hindi word which translates as “from the sub-continent.” South Asian, as defined by a number of South

Asian scholars as well as a recent *MediaWeek* article by Dan Oullette (2008) refers to those peoples and their children who originate from nations that were once part of colonial India. The South Asian community in the United States is home to dozens of cultures, languages and religions including four of the world's largest religious faiths. Despite the often tragic manifestations of conflict between these separate entities in the Sub-Continental region, their collective experiences as immigrants and post-colonial subjects provides for a pan-South Asian identity increasingly visible in the second generation. Asian identity that is referred to with the term "Desi" has many dynamics and multiple meanings. Although, the pan-identities conveyed in the term South Asian are generally reflective of the "new second generation," some intersections and subtle contradictions are becoming apparent among certain elements in the larger South Asian American community within the United States. Michael Hansen's work (2006) looking at the MTV Desi network's reverse globalization and Desi identity in America, illustrates these contradictions regarding identity and ethnic affiliations. Some of the South Asian participants in Hansen's study who identified themselves as Indian-American disagreed with connotations of 'Desi' as referring to pan-ethnic South Asian identity. Instead, these second generation Indian Americans explained how their use of the term "Desi" was exclusively directed towards people from India as opposed to other South Asian nations. This Indian hegemonic sentiment attempts to promote a religious or nationalist ideology that is in opposition to the pan-ethnic hybridization of South Asian cultures in the West. The notion of the cross-appropriation of 'Desi' illustrates how languages and cultures can often mix in the path of global flows and disjuncture. These heterogeneous flows often

lead to a hybridization of South Asian cultures (Hansen 2006, Appadurai 1996). The multiple ethnicities in the South Asian American community present a complex array of identities and pan ethnic affiliations. Interestingly, certain South Asian popular culture also serves as a space where 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans can negotiate pan-ethnic identities. The pan-ethnicity articulated with the term Desi is quite prevalent in South Asian mass media.

### Popular Culture

Nitasha Sharma(2005) among others, explored the manifestations of the South Asian cultural phenomena within Western popular culture. Several scholarly articles have emerged in the last few years focusing on the cultural flows between South Asian Americans and South Asia (Hansen 2006, Sontag 2005, Maira 1999). The lead up to the arrival of MTV Desi in America (2005), generated a degree of scholarly attention focusing on cultural globalization, identity, Bangrah music, and of course issues of race (Hansen 2006; Govind 2004; Sontag 2005; Maira 1999). The MTV World inspired channel, MTV Desi was created according to MTV executive Nusrat Durrani, to cater to the different tastes and desires of South Asian Americans (Sontag 2005). Durrani further explains how MTV concluded that, “*second-generation immigrants not only desire their own age-appropriate connection to their parents’ homeland but that they also passionately want to see their struggle to define themselves as hyphenated Americans mirrored on television*” (Sontag 2005:1) The pro-first and second generation immigrant ideology of MTV Desi unfortunately did not prove to be vital enough with regards to

profits and was subsequently taken off the air a little over a year after its initial broadcast. Considering the abundance of scholarship that emerged with the initial euphoria surrounding South Asian pan-identity via MTV Desi, further research is needed to illuminate the dynamics of Desi pan-ethnic identity and the role of South Asian popular culture within the United States.

#### “War on Terror”, Muslims & South Asian Americans

In the years following the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attack on the United States and the ensuing “war on terror”, many South Asian Americans have encountered a variety of discriminatory experiences in their everyday lives. Hate crimes against Muslims as well as Muslim looking individuals (for example Sikhs) increased seventeenfold in a single year (Sirin & Fine 2008, FBI 2002). It is important to note that the sharp increase in Islamophobia was in many ways grounded in anti-Muslim xenophobia that can be traced back to at least the early 1980’s (Gerges 2003). Overnight, “they” Muslims, became designated “others” who had to be watched, detained, and sometimes deported, in order to save “us” (Sirin & Fine 2008:1). The “us versus them” dichotomy between Western Judeo-Christian societies and Eastern societies is certainly not a new phenomenon.

The ‘us/them’ confrontation is the most persistent theme in world order perceptions. To what extent is this dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’ a cultural artifact? The dichotomy can take a variety of forms-the native versus the foreigner, familiar versus strange, East versus West, etc. This dichotomous framework of perceptions amounts to an iron law of dualism, a persistent conceptualization of the world in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’. To what extent is this mode of thinking a product of culture? (Mazrui 1990:13).

Mazrui's words convey the process by which Muslims as well as Muslim looking South Asians have become the racialized "other." Although his words are almost twenty years old, we find a new sense of urgency regarding the recent racialization of South Asian and other Muslim communities in the United States. The fact that many individuals who are only "Muslim looking" have experienced instances of Islamophobia speaks to the overall racialization of Islam in the post 9/11 United States.

Racialization or racial formations as defined by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) encompasses a socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed (p.55). With respect to the years following 9/11, it is clear that a new racial project defined as Muslim vs. non-Muslim has taken on a racialized meaning (Sirin & Fine 2008; Bayoumi 2008; Maira 2004). Since South Asians make up a large proportion of the Muslim population residing in the United States, they have often collectively been racialized as "Muslims" in spite of the vast religious diversity within the larger South Asian community (Das Gupta 2006). The ramifications of this process or "racial project" (Omi & Winant 1994) pose several challenges for identity negotiation within the younger "new second generation" South Asian American community.

*Moral Exclusion.* In the aftermath of 9/11 and the "war on terror," many South Asian Americans felt a sense of moral exclusion from the fabric of what constitutes America (Bayoumi 2008; Sirin & Fine 2008; Maira 2004). As has been outlined in the preceding discussion, the United States has a long history of accepting and rejecting immigrant groups from a variety of nations. Muslim Americans are the most recent

recipients of a long American tradition of publicly supported and institutionally sanctioned moral exclusion, enacted through legalized and institutionalized discrimination and followed by a massive unleashing of social prejudice, media stereotypes, and public hysteria (Sirin & Fine 2008:59). Due to the aforementioned racialization of Muslims, we find that many South Asians whether they are Muslim, Hindu, or Christian are routinely subjected to a similar moral exclusions. In the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, this exclusion is compounded with individual negotiations of American identities that are often in conflict with one another. The psychological and social ramifications from the moral exclusion have a variety of effects on cultural identity. Furthermore, the various levels with which South Asians or Muslims identify with their ancestry or native religions also plays a large role in the degree of exclusion the individual will experience (Sirin & Fine 2008). In order to better understand the negotiation of identity among the “new second generation” it is helpful to examine the levels of contemporary mainstream American values and beliefs in younger Muslim and South Asian youth.

#### Negotiating an American Identity.

In many cases, 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Americans may feel a stronger connection to their American identity as opposed to their parents’ home culture (Phinney & Ong 2007). With respect to non Judeo-Christian communities such as South Asians, we find interesting degrees of secularness and other “Americanizations” of religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. From their work on Muslim American Youth, Sirin and Fine (2008) highlight a Pew Research Center (2007) finding relating to secular Muslims

in America. The survey of a nationally representative sample of 1050 Muslim Americans found that 47% of all Muslim Americans identified as “Muslim first” and 28% as “American first”. These figures were reversed among those Muslims with low religious commitment. The identification pattern was similar to that of U.S. Christians, who were almost split between a “Christian first” (42%) and “American first” (48%) identity overall (Sirin & Fine 2008:127, Pew Research Center 2007). Sirin and Fine’s research finds that the majority of Muslim American youth did not favor a “Muslim first” identity at the expense of their American identity (2008:127). These findings also suggest interesting insights into South Asian American youth identity formations and levels of religiosity that are often contrary to the extremist perceptions often portrayed in the mass media (Bayoumi 2008; Sirin & Fine 2008; Maira 2004). It is also important to note that many of the aforementioned issues involving the negotiation of Muslim and American identities are also quite applicable to Hindu and Buddhist South Asian communities. (Narayan & Purkaystha 2009, Leonard 2006).

When considering the diversity of experiences for 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans we are immediately confronted with several types of assimilation trajectories that can be related to the occupational classes of the immigrant parents. The “new second generation” South Asian American community provides us with fresh insights into the collective assimilation processes of post 1965 South Asian immigrants. In addition, many younger 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans tend to negotiate Indian and Pakistani pan-ethnic identities that challenge the nationalist tone of the parent’s generation. This type of identity negotiation can be comprised of a number of

scenarios including confrontation avoidance. The need to avoid confrontation in everyday life has been dramatically exasperated for Muslim as well as Hindu and Christian South Asian Americans in the years following 9/11. The ensuing Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslim or Muslim looking people has made a degree of impact for many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. The effect of world events including the rising tensions in South Asia also play a factor in the identity negotiations of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. In spite of the increasing nationalism, many “new second generation” South Asian Americans tend to question the divisive Sub-continental politics and religious extremists. The diverse thoughts and opinions on issues of assimilation, pan-ethnic identity, and the impact of discrimination and xenophobia are illustrated in the ethnographic narratives of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian participants in this study. It is to their narratives that we now turn our attention to

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

For this project the interviewees were comprised of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. For this study, 1.5 designates those individuals who were born in their parents' home nations but were substantially raised in the United States. Second generation will refer to those individuals who were born in the United States to immigrants to were born abroad. The interviews were with five males and three females. With respect to the participant's ethnicities, I was confronted with some complexities with regards to identification terms. Three of the participants self identified as Pakistani, two identified themselves as Indian, while two other participants self identified as "Pakistani and Indian." Another mixed-race participant self identified as half Indian and half Black. The nuances inherent in these definitions will be thoroughly discussed in the findings section. The ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 51.

In order to access this group of participants, I contacted a South Asian community organization known as San Diego Desi. While in San Diego, I was able to attend one of their live music events with my family. At the event I networked with a couple of younger South Asians explaining to them the nature of my research and my interests in the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. Due to my own South Asian ancestry, I was able to freely discuss somewhat sensitive issues such as identity and race with the potential

participants. I ended up with three contacts from the event that agreed to be interviewed for this project. After interviewing the three participants from the event, I utilized a snowball sampling technique and identified four more South Asians who were thought to likely be willing to be interviewed for the project. I followed up with the contacts and was able to interview all four in the week following the original event. These interviews occurred in the privacy of the participants' homes. A final interview was conducted over the phone with an acquaintance of a colleague who was 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian American.

### Data Collection

My data collection was qualitative. My choice in using this methodology was based on the nature of my research. Due to the complexities inherent in identity research coupled with a population that is relatively understudied, qualitative research seemed to be the most appropriate form of inquiry for exploring the lived experiences of South Asian Americans. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) work on qualitative research explains why some areas of study naturally lend themselves more to qualitative type research, such as the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon like illness, religious conversion, or addiction (Strauss & Corbin 1990:19). Another important aspect of this research involved the role of my personal experiences as a 1.5-generation South Asian American. Lofland and Lofland (2006) write about how a researcher's personal experience can inspire interest in a research topic, as well as aiding the researcher's efforts to gain access to the population they wish to study. The nature of my research inquiry was tremendously influenced by my personal experiences with assimilation, identity and the

environment of post 9-11 America. I believe my personal insights in these areas serve as important components that make this study quite reflexive. Furthermore, my experiences with sensitive topics such as discrimination and identity helped participants feel more open and willing to discuss issues that they may not have discussed with a non-South Asian.

The primary method used in this study was a semi-standardized interview which consisted of 15 questions. Bruce Berg (2001) describes this type of interview as a technique that involves the implementation of a number of pre-determined questions or special topics. “These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed the freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions”(Berg 2001:70). Following the interview schedule with certain liberties, the interviews took anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours. In addition to using a semi-standardized interview schedule (Appendix B); I also employed Lofland, and Lofland’s (2006) *intensive interviewing*, where the interviews often turned into conversation style dialogue. I found that maneuvering back and forth between the semi-structured interview questions and the conversation style dialogue helped make participants feel more at ease with the overall process. Ultimately this comfort, in my opinion, allowed for richer data collection. In addition, the freedom allowed in the interview process also enabled me to get a better sense of alternative directions for future research inquires regarding South Asian Americans. Due to the understudied nature of

this population, one of my goals was to generate other questions for inquiry that could be useful in future scholarship endeavors.

Another vitally important aspect of my research methodology involved the “grounded theory” approach to qualitative inquiry.

A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other (Strauss & Corbin 1990:23).

Kathy Charmaz (2002) further explains how the grounded theory approach to qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in depth exploration of an aspect of life with which the interviewee is familiar. In order to utilize a grounded theory approach to my research I began by gathering some overall concepts and themes that had emerged from my personal experiences as a 1.5 generation South Asian American. With these themes in mind, I drafted some initial questions. I proceeded to test these questions with some colleagues as well as South Asian family members. After pre-testing the questions I revised the semi-structured interview schedule. I added several open ended questions to allow for the flexibility needed for rich data collection as described by Berg (2001) and Charmaz (2002). Once the interviews began, I continually made attempts to recognize common themes while constantly making notes of interesting points emerging from the data. As the interviews progressed, I also went back and made certain adjustments to the interview schedule as data emerged.

The interviews were comprised of both closed and open-ended questions. Four of the interviews took place in the privacy of the participants' homes, while two took place on a university campus. Another interview was done at a coffee shop, while the final interview was taken over the phone. The interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to two hours. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed shortly thereafter. I began each interview by asking participants about their family's history both in South Asia as well as in the United States. This was done in order to establish the participant's families' occupation/class before emigration to the United States. As the interview progressed I asked questions relating to participant's thoughts, experiences, and attitudes towards South Asian popular culture, assimilation, identity/pan-ethnicity, and interpersonal relations. A final section of the interview focused on participants' experiences and feelings towards South Asian current events including the effects of post-9/11 Islamophobia in the United States and abroad.

### Data Analysis

In the grounded theory approach to qualitative analysis, data is analyzed soon after it is compiled. Unlike the quantitative nature of inquiry where data collection occurs long before analysis, by using the grounded theory approach, I began analyzing interviewee transcripts immediately after they were compiled. This allowed for more control over the data as well as future interview questions. Charmaz (2002) outlines two approaches inherent in grounded theory, the "constructivist" and "objectivist"; in my work I use the "constructivist approach." Charmaz defines this approach as a process

where the researcher accounts for the emerging themes as a shared experience between the interviewer and the interviewee (Charmaz 2002:677). Instead of viewing myself as a researcher looking in from the outside, I found that placing myself in the experiences of the interviewees allowed for richer and meaningful analysis. By using the constructivist approach, I felt confident that my findings were the lived experiences of the South Asian Americans I interviewed.

All interview transcript data was analyzed with the NVivo qualitative analysis software. With the NVivo software, I employed an initial open coding process for my initial analysis of the data. “Open-coding” as outlined by Strauss & Corbin is the initial part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomenon through close examination of data (1990:62). Following the grounded theory approach to data analysis, the coding and categorization occurred in two phases. First, I did a general coding where I began conceptualizing the data. Here every transcript was analyzed line for line, word for word. After I had compiled several “free-nodes” designating a myriad of coded topics I began the second phase of categorization. In the categorization phase I grouped together related experiences from the interviewees into categories referred to as “tree-nodes” in the NVivo software. I went back and recoded three times. Each time I made note of free floating concepts and certain re-categorizations that may have occurred in the process. These categories then became the basis for the themes reported in the findings section.

### Confidentiality and Management of Risks

Before any of the research began, a detailed proposal was submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Institutional Review Board. In the proposal, I outlined how disciplinary ethical standards would be maintained while constantly accounting for any real or perceived risk to human participants. Within the proposal, I outlined the nature of my study as well as the potential benefit and minimal risks posed to South Asian Americans. The only potential for risk was the fact that some of the issues addressed in the research were of a sensitive nature. That being said, due to the underrepresented nature of South Asians in most aspects of American life, I felt that this research would be welcomed and beneficial to my participants due to the fact that they would get to tell of their personal experiences as “hyphenated-Americans. I also felt the post 9/11 Islamophobia component would be especially liberating for South Asian Muslims who have sometimes resisted inquiries into discrimination in order to avoid confrontation. Each participant was given a consent form to read and sign before any of the interviews took place. Furthermore, all real names and other identifying information was removed from all transcript data and kept in a secure separate location. I assigned fictitious South Asian names to participants for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality in reported findings.

### Limitations

The main limitation of this research is the size and ethnic makeup of the sample pool of participants. The obvious reasons for this include time constraints, as well as the

demographic nature of the groups in question. In a perfect scenario, I would have liked to continue my data collection for another six months to one year. The sample of participants is also quite small once it is broken down into participants with either Indian or Pakistani backgrounds. The composition of my sample pool falls into the same dilemma facing much of the South Asian academic community with regards to the underrepresentation of other South Asian nationalities such as Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi. Fortunately, I will continue this research project for my doctoral dissertation and will have the opportunity to dramatically increase the size and diversity of my sample pool.

Had time permitted, I would have liked to have had more time in between interviews as well as more time to analyze the data from each interview as it was compiled. Another limitation is reflected in the gender balance the participants. I would have liked to have had a more equal number of men and women in the study. Due to the fact that men ended up slightly outnumbering women, I found it difficult to make any claims that may or may not be gender specific. There were also more self-identified Pakistani's compared to Indians, which also imposed limitations on my findings. Due to these realities, the claims and findings I will discuss are to be viewed as glimpses into an understudied population of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. In cases where religions were discussed, designations were made between Muslim and non-Muslim South Asians. Overall, despite the small sample size, I was able to find a number of important and common themes that I believe are critical for future researchers to address in order to gain valuable insights into the dynamics of 21<sup>st</sup> century immigration

as well as the growing South Asian American community.

## CONTEMPORARY SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS

In many ways the primary objective of this study has been to generally explore the lived experiences of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians in America. In particular, the central areas of interests to emerge from the data concern issues of identity negotiation, pan-ethnicity as well as the effects of xenophobia and discrimination in post-9/11 American society. Through in-depth analysis of interview transcripts, I have found certain interconnected commonalities among the participants' attitudes and lived experiences that highlight the intricacies of segmented assimilation theory as well as the nuances inherent in the negotiation of a South Asian-American identity. In addition, the context of post 9/11 America as well as current events in South Asia, also served as important life-course changing events with regards to several participants' experiences with discrimination, identity and their respective views on the geo-politics in the sub-continent. In the following discussion, I will describe various aspects of the participants' thoughts on the aforementioned themes.

In order to freely discuss the results of the study I will take the opportunity to introduce the eight participants by briefly providing a persona to match the names in the following discussion. The names of the individual participants have been replaced with similar alternative South Asian names. The names used have been selected in accordance to participants' family religion, which was the method that most participants had

experienced in their own families. The single multi-racial participant was assigned an arbitrary name to replace his actual Judeo-Christian name.

*Meet Aliya.* Aliya is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani-American. She is a 29-year-old recently married lawyer who lives and works in San Diego. Her parents came to the United States in 1978. Both were physicians and initially settled in Connecticut. A few years later in 1982, they moved to San Diego where they have remained to this day. Aliya attended private schools for her early education and received a law degree from Columbia University. Despite her relative secular upbringing, she identifies culturally and ethnically with Islam as well as Pakistan. She does not observe any of the religious customs or rituals associated with Islam. Her Islamic identity is a minuscule part of her overall identity that is complex and rooted in her relationship with her parents. The majority of her friends and social networks have been comprised of white upper class Anglo-Americans. She is also married to a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Irish American biologist and generally speaking does not socialize with other South Asians.

*Meet Nora.* Nora is a 27 year old 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani-American. Her family came to the United States in 1975. She followed her father's footsteps by becoming a lawyer. She lives in an exclusive upper-middle class neighborhood in San Diego, California. Her family also lives in an affluent area within San Diego, and are quite active in the local South Asian community. Both Nora and her family have a liberally secular and cultural appreciation of their Islamic heritage. Although she finds many similarities between India and Pakistan, she self-identifies as Pakistani whenever she is asked. Her emphasis on Pakistan has increased since the tragedy of 9/11. Since 9/11, Nora has started wearing a gold "Allah" pendant. Although she is not religious, she likes to wear it and draw attention to it so that people will ask questions. Though she did not pay much attention to her ethnicity in her early life, she is far more conscious of it today. Her primary network of friends have been predominately upper-middle class white Americans. The only South Asians that she interacts with, aside from her family, are colleagues from law school.

*Meet Ansam.* Ansam is a 51-year-old 1.5-Generation Psychiatrist and father of three. He and his wife came to the United States in 1976 after getting married in England. Ansam was born in Pakistan roughly a decade after his family was relocated following the partitioning of colonial India. He moved to England with his father when he was 10 years old and remained there until his mid 20's. After failing medical school in England, he was advised to go to a South Asian medical school where he might be less culturally confused. After finishing medical school Ansam returned to England where he eventually was married to a Pakistani woman. All three of his children were born in San Diego where they all currently live. Ansam self-identifies as Indian despite the fact he is married to a Pakistani and was born in what is today considered Pakistan. His identification with Indian culture and society are also influenced by his strong feelings

towards the mistakes involved with the Partition. Ansam is a self-described atheist, and strongly identifies with India's pluralist society. He despises all forms of religious fundamentalism. He believes that South Asia as a region will be better off as one "Mother India." Ansam's network of friends primarily consist of white upper-middle class Americans as well as several Indian and Pakistani Americans. Ansam is a bit weary of most Pakistanis even though his wife is Pakistani. He feels that the average Pakistani-American is far too materialistic and single-minded.

*Meet Naveen.* Naveen is a 27-year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian-American. He works as an engineer for the State of California. Naveen's family immigrated to the United States in 1976. After living with family for a short while in Atlanta, Naveen's family moved to San Diego. Naveen's father was a physician while his mother was a homemaker. They had relatively comfortable life. His mother is quite active with the local South Asian community and volunteers at the local temple. Although Naveen is not very religious, he tries to abide by the dietary restrictions in Hinduism. He also accompanies his family to the temple for religious holidays and celebrations. Both Naveen and his family belong to an extended network of South Asians in the Southern California area. Most of Naveen's friends and colleagues are either Indian, white or Chinese. Although the majority of his tastes for music and film are American, he is very much a fan of South Asian filmmakers who try to breakout of the "bollywood" mold.

*Meet Razwan.* Razwan or "Raz" to his friends, is a 22 year 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani American. He is a first year law student who self-identifies as "half Indian, half Pakistani". He is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. He has started to make an effort to say both countries in order to more accurately describe his ethnicity. Razwan's father is Indian while his mother is Pakistani. His family came to the United States in 1978 as physicians. They moved to San Diego in 1984. Razwan and his family have lived relatively comfortably for his entire life. He is a product of private schools and currently attends UCLA. Although Razwan's mother has made an effort to teach him about Islam, he tends to identify more with Hinduism and his father. He generally does not believe in any organized religion and favors a secular but spiritual relationship with God. His identification with Hinduism has also been tremendously influenced by his love for meditation. Having lived upper middle class neighborhood for most of his life, Razwan's social networks have been predominately comprised of white Americans. He has never had much interest in any of the South Asian popular culture his mom enjoys. His first favorable interaction with other 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians has occurred just recently as a result of law school. By sharing his experiences with other middle class 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians, Razwan has found a new group of friends with whom he shares many commonalities. This re-connection with South Asian culture has in many ways invigorated Razwan. In a few short months he has become the president of his school's South Asian student association. He is also planning to do a legal internship this summer in India where he hopes to learn the language better so that he may feel more connected.

*Meet Chris.* Chris is 29 year old 2<sup>nd</sup> generation American. His ethnic and racial identity transcends most categorizations. Chris describes himself as “half Indian, half Black.” Chris’s father emigrated from the Fiji Islands in 1972. His father married his mother in 1974. Shortly after Chris was born, his father divorced his mother and returned to India. His mother raised Chris in a small home in the Watts section of Los Angeles. For the first half of Chris’s life, his African features allowed him to somewhat identify and blend in with the surrounding African-American population. But in his teenage years, he began to notice that he also possessed many phenotypic features that were more characteristic of South Asians rather than African Americans. These variances in Chris’ physical appearance created many difficulties for him in his adolescent years. When Chris was a teenager, his Father returned and eventually, Chris re-united with him. Chris currently manages a few of the several motels that his father owns. Chris dislikes when people ask him about his ethnicity. He feels that because of his mixed features he has never been accepted by either the Black or Indian community. Chris also disagrees with the stereotypes of Indians portraying them as scientists and doctors. Chris takes pride in his family business and feels that although the Indian community looks down on Indians like his father, he believes that their contributions to the State of California are just as important. Chris has very little knowledge of South Asian culture. His upbringing in the African American community of Los Angeles has influenced most of his tastes in clothing, music, as well as women. Despite this, in recent years, Chris has experienced xenophobic discrimination often from the mouths of other African Americans. These experiences have made Chris reject ethnic categorization even further. Ultimately Chris believes that terms and categories are created to divide people. He tries to avoid them whenever he can.

*Meet Imam.* Imam is a 28 year old 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani America. He lives in San Diego where he works as a P.E. teaching aide for a local elementary school. Imam’s father immigrated to the United States in 1969. Upon his arrival in Los Angeles, his father was one of the first Pakistani immigrants in Southern California. Within a few years Imam’s father owned and operated a successful motel. This would eventually turn into the ownership and management of several motels and convenient stores throughout Southern California. Although, Imam’s family is financially secure, they do not possess the education or specialization that was characteristics of the majority of South Asian immigrants of the time. Imam recently received a bachelor’s degree in History from a local state college. Imam, as well as his family, is moderately religious. Although they attend the local mosque a few times a year, neither Imam nor his family follow the daily customs associated with Islam such as dietary prohibitions or prayer. Imam’s social network consists of a diverse population including several South Asians. Imam self-identifies as a Pakistani American and prefers this to terms such as Desi due to its religious ambiguity.

*Meet Perveen.* Perveen is a 39-year-old 1.5-generation Indian American. She is a mother of two and currently works at a convenience store owned by her brother-in-law. Perveen is a practicing Hindu and takes a great deal of pride in her Indian heritage. She came to the United States at the age of 13 when her parents moved from Delhi to New York in 1983. After finishing high school in New York, Perveen was married and came to San Diego in the early 1990's. She has continually struggled with balancing both American and Indian culture. She finds many challenges in America that are barriers to living a proper "Hindu" life. Although Perveen feels religion is an important part of her identity, she loathes fundamentalist of all persuasions. She has been very troubled by the recent events in South Asia where much of her family still resides. Perveen and her family live in a modest two-bedroom apartment in a lower middle class neighborhood in San Diego. Her social networks consist primarily of South Asians, particularly Indians. She also likes to make friends with the customers who come into the store where she works. Perveen considers herself to be more Indian than American and often contemplates the two in relation to the upbringing of her children.

#### Dynamics of Assimilation

*Segmented Trajectories.* Six of the participants were 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans, while two others are considered 1.5 because they were born in South Asia but raised in the West. All eight of the participants in the study belonged to families who immigrated to the United States after the changes to immigration laws following 1965. Five out of the eight participants were from families who were highly educated upon arrival to the United States. As has been discussed in the introduction, many South Asian immigrants in the 1970's were physicians, scientists or trained in other specialized fields (Das Gupta 2006, Saran 1985). The other three participants' family backgrounds were less educated and reflect many features of segmented assimilation (Portes & Zhou 1993) with regards to downward or stagnant assimilation in the subsequent generation. Four of the five participants' from highly educated/middle class families were lawyers or law students. Three other participants' families were in the motel or convenience store

business. Two of these individuals worked as motel workers while one was a store clerk. The oldest participant, at age 51, was a psychiatrist.

Despite the fact that five out of the eight participants identified with the tenants of classic or “straight-line” upward assimilation, the remaining three participants tended to have negative feelings towards generalized South Asian notions of upward assimilation and success. Reflecting on downward or stagnant assimilation for 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians, Imam explains his feelings regarding expectations for him to be as successful as his parents.

Our generation for sure is not all going to have the same wealth as our parents. Like in my extended family only one or two will make as much as my parents. The reason for this is because the South Asians who came over here were really exceptional... it is beyond reason to say that the next group will match up.

Imam’s doubts of his own potential to measure up to his parents speaks to the cultural and societal pressures many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians feel when confronted with the common cultural stereotypes of success as well as pressures that result from the “model minority” concept championed by both American and South Asian conservatives (Das Gupta 2006, Barringer & Kassebaum 1989). Although, Imam’s parents live comfortably as motel owners/managers, Imam rejects the notion that “all” South Asians are highly educated and financially successful. Despite his parents’ success in motel entrepreneurship, Imam clearly feels that his ability to measure up financially to his parents is pretty unlikely. In contrast, Aliya, Nora and Razwan in many ways reflect a highly successful group of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans who manage to fulfill classic assimilation theory in some respects. It should be noted, that none of the

participants' lived experiences have been immune from the issues of race, so their experiences still challenge many of the classic assimilation arguments usually applied to European immigrants.

*Language.* Six out of the eight participants did not speak their native South Asian language. All six participants were 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and tended to follow other immigrant groups' experiences with child immersion in English coupled with a minimization of native languages spoken in the home. The two participants who did speak South Asian languages were both born in South Asia and spoke fluently with their parents at home. The significance of maintaining one's native language in the context of assimilation was quite relevant to participant's conceptions of identity and connections to South Asian culture. South Asian popular culture tended to resonate strongest with the few participants who either spoke or understood South Asian languages such as Hindi or Urdu. Imam explains, "*I am grateful that I can understand Urdu and Hindi. It makes me feel more connected to South Asia by being able to watch cricket and the daily news reports from there. I especially like getting the Pakistani and Indian perspectives on the War on Terror. They give you details that you can't get on CNN.*" For the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Imam, the ability to speak and understand South Asian languages gives him a sense of belonging with regards to South Asian popular culture. On the other hand, many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians sometimes have little knowledge of their parent's native language.

The sense of disconnection expressed by 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians with regards to their inability to speak their native language may be related to whether or not 1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans feel connected to the larger South Asian immigrant community. Razwan, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani law student, explains how he feels completely detached from his ethnicity because of the language barrier.

I understand some Urdu, but I don't really speak it...that's one my biggest, well I won't say regret because I don't know I ever had the opportunity, but one thing I really want to do soon, is learn the language. I feel it has always been a big barrier between whenever we go to sort of Indian or Pakistani events, everyone else can speak the language and I can't and that automatically makes me feel like an outsider ...so I would really like to learn the language

While assimilation pressures often force 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Americans to adopt purely American customs and the English language, the inability for children of immigrants to converse in their respective native languages can seriously affect identity negotiation for “hyphenated” Americans. Furthermore, participants also expressed the need to speak English like “Americans,” meaning to speak without an accent. Nora, a Pakistani lawyer who cannot speak nor understand Urdu, expresses this. *“I know when I was young, I was really embarrassed of how Indians spoke English. Like I remember when I would watch the Indian store clerk character from the Simpson's show, I would get really embarrassed. I think I probably tried really hard to avoid speaking Urdu, just so I would not sound like that”*. Although the sentiment expressed by Nora is similar to that of other participants in the study, the variety of pressures that necessitate immigrants to adopt English over their native language is a subject that will continue to generate heated debates in regards to education/funding in both academic and policy circles.

*Religious Orientations.* Although seven of the participants did not consider themselves to be religious, all eight participants expressed certain cultural connections to the religions of their respective families. Five of the eight participants' families were Muslim while the other two came from Hindu families. Another participant who is mixed-race had both Christian and Hindu family backgrounds. All five participants' Muslim families emigrated from Pakistan while the two Hindu participants' families originated from India. The Hindu/Christian participant's family emigrated from Fiji. With the exception of Perveen, all participants considered themselves to "not be very religious." Razwan illustrates this common expression of low religiosity among seven of the participants in the following passage.

I think growing up I was probably religious as a little kid just the way all little kids take on their parents' religion...so my mom believed in God and taught me the basic Muslim prayers... and then maybe around 12 or 13, I really started questioning it...and then increasingly, I became sort of skeptical about religion in general and especially mine and didn't really believe it anymore and that feeling got stronger as I got older. And now I am kind of at a point where I have a lot respect for religions and religious people and so on, but I am definitely not religious myself.

Many of the participants' feelings towards their family religions were quite complex and tied to issues of culture and identity. The role of religion in identity formation will be addressed later in this section. Due to the pan-ethnic focus of this study, little time will be spent analyzing the differences between how Islam and Hinduism have been adapted into American society. Also given the small size of the interview pool, this important aspect of South Asian American research is beyond the scope of this project. What is important for

this exploration is how seven out of the eight participants' feelings towards religion in general tended to follow the secular trends that are representative of the larger American society (Sirin & Fine 2008, Pew Research Center 2007).

Another important aspect of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans is related to the issues of religious fundamentalism. All eight of the participants expressed strong opposition to the types of religious fundamentalism that have shaped South Asia both historically and contemporarily. Due to many of the participant's non-religious orientations, the strong attitudes toward religious zealots were in many ways to be expected. Some of the attitudes and reflections are interestingly captured by the following remarks from Perveen, who was the only self-described religious participant.

I love my religion and culture, but I hate how fundamentalist men are always using God to get poor people to kill. Look at this Mumbai bombing, and the first thing Hindus in India say is, "the Muslims did it, the Muslims did." Whether they did or not, these kinds of actions happen because of fundamentalist men. Both sides are usually to blame.

Perveen's reference to the Mumbai bombing of 2008 is also an important point to consider in relation to the participants' general attitudes towards religious fundamentalism. These same attitudes were equally expressed with regards to rising trends of South Asian nationalism, which will be discussed later in the current events portion of the results section. Seven of the eight participants' considered themselves to be "not religious." In addition, all participants were strongly opposed to religious extremism. I found this to be interesting due to the fact that the majority of the participants also felt that they really did not know what the historical Muslim and Hindu

grievances were and the intersections with politics. The participants' attitudes towards religious extremists was very much in line with mainstream Western consensus; this illustrates important differences between the 1.5/2<sup>nd</sup> generation and their parents' generation who may identify strongly with nationalist or religious identities.

*Dating and Marriage.* There were some interesting views expressed on dating and marriage based on the participants' past and current experiences. Three of the eight participants were married. Of the three married participants, two were married to South Asian partners. Interestingly these two 1.5 generation participants were also born in South Asia. The other married participant, Aliya was married to an Irish American. Her choice in marriage was something that she expressed was quite emotional for her given familial pressures to marry a South Asian man.

I've just never dated South Asian men. I mean I know it would make my mom's family really happy, but I have never been attracted to South Asians. I have always dated white men and that is why I am married to a white man. My family ended up not really caring. As long as I am happy, that is what is most important for my family. But I don't see anything wrong with it, you know, dating Pakistanis. But I am also very against arranged marriages; I think that is a custom that will need to be reformed sooner than later.

Aliya illustrates the pressures that are often placed by immigrant families on subsequent generations to maintain cultural "purity" in marriage. Aliya also describes how her white upper-middle class upbringing influenced her tastes in men and life-style. The other four non-married participants also shared experiences of diversity with regards to dating. Of the two 1.5 generation South Asians who were married to South Asian partners, Ansam's feelings towards his "real" 1<sup>st</sup> generation Pakistani wife illustrates some of the

complexities present in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generation that are often absent in the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants.

Well my own situation is quite sadly odd, because I am married to a real Pakistani, who conveniently disagrees with all of my political and religious view points, so she was born in Pakistan. Raised in Pakistan, so she has conventional Pakistani viewpoints including all of the delusions. So she can't stand Indians and doesn't want to socialize with Indians. I can stand Indians and Pakistanis, but find Indians are more fun. More tolerant, more pluralistic, more secular, for the reasons I just gave, so I have more fun with Indians but since she can't, or doesn't like socializing with Indians, so we don't meet Indians. She likes socializing with Pakistanis.

The joking and lighthearted manner in which Ansam describes his marriage illustrates some of the stronger divisions that can exist among 1.5 South Asian Americans. It is safe to assume that of the five single participants that there is no guarantee that they will marry South Asians. Although many immigrant families may continue to strive for a cultural connectivity in the subsequent generations, the individual experiences and socialization of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians will be the ultimate determining factors with regards to who they select for marriage partners. Furthermore, these variations in dating and marriage preferences among the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants illustrate various components in the overall process of assimilation into American society.

## Identity & Pan-Ethnicity

The issue of identity formations and ethnic affiliations is a central and interconnected theme in the experiences of all eight participants. In many ways, the various means by which each participant negotiates their identity, influences and reflects their respective views and attitudes regarding the aforementioned factors in assimilation. From the experiences of the eight participants, it is clear that identity or ethnic affiliation in 1.5/2<sup>nd</sup> generation is certainly related to social networks, family social and occupation classes, and cultural-religious background. Due to the fact that all eight participants are connected to either India or Pakistan (the largest nations in South Asia), they share several interconnected factors that influence the constant negotiations of their respective identities. Current events in recent years involving South Asia, Islam/Hindu terrorism, and religious extremism create a host of additional factors that affect identity and notions of pan-ethnicity in the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian American community. The particular impact of 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror will be discussed separately in a different section. I will begin with a discussion of several insightful participant experiences with the negotiation of identity as “hyphenated Americans.”

All eight participants described feelings of having a pan-ethnic orientation toward other South Asians. All eight participants also expressed that their feelings on the matter of Pakistan versus India were all quite different from the nationalistic tone of their parents’ generation. It should also be noted that given the fact that there were no Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, or Bhutanese participants, any findings resulting in this

research can only represent the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Indian and Pakistani Americans I interviewed. Had these groups been represented, the following findings on pan-ethnicity and identity may have differed substantially.

Among the eight participants of Indian or Pakistani backgrounds, all expressed similarities and preferences for cultural markers such as language, food, music, etc. Ethnic affiliations and identity as defined in everyday social interaction were also often related with situation specific circumstances. Often the situation involved the need to avoid complexity or confrontation in casual conversation settings. The most frequent cases of confrontation avoidance were present amongst Muslim Pakistani participants. This phenomenon will be addressed later in the findings. The use of an Indian identity for Pakistani participants further promotes a Pan-ethnic interpretation of Indians and Pakistani in the “new second generation”. An overall trend to avoid confrontation was a central theme in several participants’ experiences with identity and pan-ethnicity.

Pan-Ethnicity was also discussed in a variety of ways including ethnic identification preferences (terminology), religious distinctions, as well as preferred terms for formal ethnicity categorization on forms. Key factors emerging from the results influencing pan-ethnic identities involve the role of higher-education and professional environments as well as the questioning of South Asian nationalisms. Another important component in the participants’ notions of pan-ethnicity revolved around the term and concept of “Desi.” In addition to participant feelings towards “Desi” culture, participants

also discussed pan-ethnicity in relation to their individual tastes and consumption of various South Asian mass media such as Bollywood movies and cricket.

*Higher Education & Professional Environments.* Of the eight participants, the six who possessed higher education all made remarks about collegiate settings being the initial environment in which they first socialized and connected with other 1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians. This certainly follows along the same pattern established for other Asian groups with regards to a relationship between pan-ethnicity and universities or activist environments (Park 2008, Okamoto 2006). Education was highly valued by the 6 highly educated participants. This is illustrated in the following passage from the 51 year old Psychiatrist, Ansam.

I think the less educated you are, the more your cultural life is based around your village, your religions or your family, and as you go up in education you take a more global view. So already my life is mixture of California, England Deli, Pakistani, three or four countries. In terms of loyalty, I am more influenced by the writings of people more than what my mom and dad told me. People who are less educated tend to be more influenced by the parents. So I have different religious viewpoints than my parents and that's why I reject nationalism when it comes to India and Pakistan.

Razwan, who self identifies "half Indian, half Pakistani", is currently a first year law student. He discussed his lack of South Asian friends growing up and how law school was the first environment where he was able to meet and interact with other 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians. He elaborates on how growing up he often avoided other South Asian or Desi friends because of his disapproval of the type of self-segregation that sometimes occurs within immigrant communities.

At school I've become much more connected with and friends with Indian people and Pakistani, well actually Indians, there are not many Pakistanis there. Partly the reason why it hasn't been until now is because growing up whenever my parents had people over who were Indian or Pakistani and equally when I was at Berkeley and England it seemed like they were all the type of people like what I was saying earlier where all of their friends are "Desi"... all of their social interactions, their movies, was completely you know Indian or Pakistani... and none of them really had any white friends and you know that was kind of their life and I never really fit in with them... and in contrast I fit in a lot better with regular white Americans who have the same types of hobbies, same tastes in music, same culture... so even though I had that part of my culture as well, it was the smaller part ...so in Law School, now I've recently become involved with this group called SALSA, South Asian Law Students Association, and its really through that that I have made a lot more Desi Friends.

The university and professional environment of law school provided Razwan with a space in which he could meet and interact with other 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians who shared many similar experiences with him. His determination to get involved helped him become the president of the student association he mentions in the passage. In addition to higher education, other factors may also contribute to pan-ethnicity among 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians. Naveen shared a similar experience with his South Asian friends from college.

The South Asians at my school, never even asked me if I was Pakistani or Indian, they all assumed I had some connection to South Asia. And I think part of it might be the fact that's also why I became friends with these people so quickly... is because a lot of them are more close to me compared to the types of people that my parents would have over for dinner. We are all 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and they all take a certain amount of pride in their ethnicity, but at the same time on the whole, none of them speak with accents, some speak Urdu/Hindi but others don't, and when we meet, we all speak in English, we all enjoy Desi food, and we like to joke about how our parents do things because we all have that shared experience. We can all connect on that level and everyone is very inclusive.

In the case of the other two participants who did not possess college degrees, the notion of a pan-ethnic identity and a common culture between India and Pakistan was also present. Chris expresses his views on the similarities between Indians and Pakistanis.

Terms and religions just make divisions because once an Indian cat hollers at a Pakistan cat, and you take away religion or what village you was born in, we are the same people we still have a lot of the same customs, we still eat a lot of the same food.

Chris' sentiments illustrate a pan-ethnic orientation that is not confined solely to the halls of 'ivory towers.' It is important to note, that the overall low levels of religious identification may have influenced the participants to reject the religious nationalism more common in the first generation. Had the participants been more religious, notions of pan-ethnicity may have differed substantially from what was reported here. The concept of "Desi" as a culture, region, and identification term was also an important factor in participants' notions of identity and pan-ethnicity.

"*Desi*". All eight participants were at least somewhat familiar with the concept and Hindi/Urdu term "Desi". As has been discussed, the very essence of the term can often symbolize pan-ethnicity for the Sub-Continent. Although there is a degree of convolution surrounding the number of nations that constitute "Desi" culture, a underlying affinity for pan-ethnic solidarity is often connected with the term. Participant understandings of the term ranged from geographical interpretations to matters of historical loyalties. Due to the fact that most of the participants did not speak Urdu or Hindi, very few actually used the term in everyday conversation. Nora, a second

generation Pakistani-American states, *“I guess I consider myself Desi, but I never use that term.”* Other 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants cited the fact that they did not speak Hindi with their parents as the reason for why they did not use the term. Despite the fact that all eight participants had some recollection of the term, the definitions of who and what Desi referred to were quite convoluted.

Ansam, the 51-year-old psychiatrist elaborates on the role of history and loyalty with regards to determining who is “Desi” and who is not.

If you declare your loyalty to Mother India or Hindustan or South Asia, does that make you a Desi or not. So in Hindu mythology, the Muslims arrived as Invaders and battered people because they themselves were not ethnically Indians, they were Uzbeks. So Barbar arrived in India as an invader and today he is not an Indian hero. But Akbar is an Indian hero. He was Barbar's grandson. So what makes one Desi? They had the same ethnicity, the same skin color, the same language and they ate the same food...and they both lived in Delhi, they were both Moguls. They're distinction is in Loyalty. Barbar was loyal to Uzbekistan and he pillaged and raped... according to the Hindu version of history. They were bad men, who were not loyal to India... just like the British, they came looted, raped, pillaged and went back to mother England. The British never stayed and became loyal to India, but as some point the Muslims did become loyal to India. That started with Akbar, and Akbar then was loyal to India and not Uzbekistan. So when Nether Shah, and the Persians attacked Delhi, Delhi had a lot of Muslims and they defended it. They fought with their Hindu Muslims brothers and defeated the Persian forces. So you can be white or black or brown but really Desi has more to do with loyalty.

Despite the lack of South Asian historical knowledge expressed by the younger participants, other participants shared Ansam’s opinion of Desi and its geographic and cultural implications. When asking participants about nationalities that are included in their definition of Desi, I often inquired about their thoughts with regards to Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Due to the questions raised in earlier South Asian

American research (Das Gupta 2008, Hansen 2006) pertaining to Indian hegemony associated with terms such as Desi or South Asian, I was curious to explore participants' views on the subject. In addition, due to the cultural and familial ties between tribes in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the fact that US foreign policy and military engagements in the region include Afghanistan, and potentially Pakistan, I felt that a brief exploration into South Asian American views on issues in the region was warranted. Whether or not my participants viewed Afghans as Desi's, may influence their overall opinions on U.S. missions and goals in South Asia. Many of the younger 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants also determined their conceptions of "Desi" based on geography and cultural loyalty.

In every case, all eight participants rejected the idea that Afghanistan or Afghans were ethnically "Desi." Razwan remarks on his limited understanding of "Desi," *I know it includes India and Pakistan, but definitely not Afghanistan or Nepal.* This is a not-surprising finding considering the multi-faceted negative representation we are constantly bombarded with concerning Afghanistan. Further research needs to be conducted to see if certain nationalities in the Sub-Continent are regularly excluded from the designation of Desi, or if this is just an anomaly of this research.

With regards to Desi and pan-ethnicity, at least that spans India and Pakistan, all eight of the participants expressed positive feelings towards the inclusiveness and neutrality of the term. Using "Desi" as opposed to Pakistani or Indian was a way in which some of the participants reject the nationalism and divisiveness of their parents'

generation. Imam explains how his view of “Desi” is similar to how Latin is used in our society to designate a variety of cultures and ethnicity.

For me, Desi is like the equivalent to the term Latin... like if your Dominican, Puerto Rican. Mexican, whatever... you are Latin. That’s the one term that covers all of the groups. The one thing they have in common in language. It is the same in the subcontinent, whether Pakistan, Bangladeshi, or India, they are all Desi, they have so many common threads and it is really the genetic pool. Desi to me describes a certain a dialect or ethnicity.

For Imam, the use of a pan-ethnic term such as “Desi” or South Asian enables him to avoid using the term Pakistani in certain situations where social interactions may feel uncomfortable due to instances of Islamophobia. With the increasing popular media representations of Pakistan and its inherent ties to the Taliban or Al-Queada, Pakistani identity is connected to several negative images prevalent in the contemporary moment. This phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail shortly. The negotiation of identity by use of one ethnic definition versus another was another common experiences shared by several of the participants.

*Transnational South Asian Popular Culture.* With the exception of Aliya, all seven participants expressed interests in South Asian popular culture. The types of pop-culture that were mentioned originated both in South Asia as well as the West. Tastes for South Asian popular culture can also be related to participants embracing of pan-ethnicity based on shared cultural phenomenon such as song, dance, food, and film. Another interesting finding was the fact that several of the participants enjoyed South Asian mass

media despite the fact that they could not understand most of the words. Nora explains her tastes for Indian cinema,

I love Bollywood movies, and that's about it. I don't listen to any of the music unless it comes from a movie I have seen. I do like the CD's of the movies I watch and can sing along, kind of. I don't really know what it all means but I like it. I often get the CD's from my aunties who are way into it.

Other interests involving South Asian pop-culture included the viewing of cricket matches, and other South Asian T.V. shows via satellite. Imam, who understands Urdu and Hindi fluently, explains of his obsession with cricket.

I watch a lot of cricket matches from India and Pakistan; I am not as much into the movies but since I have all of the channels sometimes I will watch them. On the satellite, I get like 15 different Indian and Pakistani channels that cater to South Asians. It's just like the Spanish networks they have for Latinos.

As has been discussed in several articles relating to South Asian cultural globalization (Hansen 2006, Maira 1999), there is certainly evidence of consumption and enjoyment among the 1.5 and 2nd generation. It is also clear that for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants, despite having some interest in South Asian popular culture, American culture tends to dominate the majority of the participants' tastes with regards to music and film. In addition, the recent surges in hybrid mass media projects that incorporate both South Asian and Western artists and styles was generally welcomed by the all of the participants in the study. In particular five of the participants expressed approval and appreciation for the British produced Oscar winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* that depicts the lives of Muslim slum children in Mumbai, India. Naveen expresses his view on his tastes in films,

With movies I like a lot of independent and foreign films and some documentaries. On the South Asian side, I'm a fan of Deepa Mehta's work. I enjoy how she challenges her audiences to think past their prejudice. I also thought *Born Into Brothels* was an amazing documentary. It was sad but hopeful. It's great to hear that a lot of those children are living better lives now. I thought the new film *Slumdog Millionaire* was very well done, but it's too bad it took a bunch of Brits to make it. I'm not a fan of most Bollywood films. Hopefully Bollywood can learn a thing or two from films like *Slumdog*.

In general, the fusion of hybridized cultural phenomenon such as Western films about Indian slums, American Rap songs with Indian classical music samples, or Punjabi Dance songs played over hip hop beats, were well received by all eight of the participants. The phenomenon of Bangrah music that has received considerable scholarly attention was also a favorable pop cultural event according to some participants. Bangrah is a type of folk music accompanied by dance which is the official indigenous music for Punjabi Sikhs, Muslims as well as some Hindus. The Punjabi roots of Bangrah music are tied to Diasporic communities of Pakistani and Punjabi Sikhs who originate from the pre-partition province of Punjab. In America, Bangrah music is popular among all South Asian American ethnicities and is particularly vibrant in Wedding ceremonies as well as university campuses (Maira 1999). Imam recollects of his experiences attending the UCLA Bangrah Association annual party and competition.

I don't do the dances myself, but I watch... I've gone to a few. The UCLA one is one of the biggest ones, they have a huge Bangrah club, and every year they put on huge Bangrah events and it's well known in the Desi community. Afterwards they have a big after party

Imam proceeds to explain how his experiences at the after-parties have been generally positive with a couple of exceptions. He elaborates how sometimes, due to the fact that people self-segregate a little, fights have broken out between Muslims and Hindus and between different castes present at the event.

At the after-parties, they sometime start fighting. Just like any other group, I think its part of human nature to clique up like that...have your own crews. One thing that made it different is that they separate based on caste, so there was this Gid caste that was real tough kind of gang and they are all in one caste and then Muslims definitely have their own gang. For the most part everybody gets along, but just like everywhere, there are one or two troublemakers always around.

The various compositions of 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans present in University environment allows for a variety of realities to prevail simultaneously. In the Bangrah after-parties described by Imam, we may find several South Asians dancing together while others are self-segregating. Fights may occur between different groups which should not be cause for alarm. Like many other ethnic groups in Southern California, the possibility of altercations at events with alcohol is unfortunately quite normal and routine. The various elements participating at the Bangrah parties speaks to the diverse and heterogeneity of the young South Asian-American community that is slowly emerging.

This first section of findings highlights the cultural experiences that came out the interviews. These experiences, and related discussions of identity, highlight instances of pan-ethnicity and segmented assimilation, which I will discuss in more detail in the Implications Chapter. We now turn to a consideration of experiences of discrimination

and current events, and how these contribute to common experiences and pan-ethnic affiliations among 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians. In particular we will consider the impacts and effects of the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and the ensuing “war on terror.”

## DISCRIMINATION AND CURRENT EVENTS

Regardless of religious background or individual levels of religiosity, all eight participants expressed feelings about, as well as some personal accounts of discrimination in years following the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. All eight of the participants' experiences with Islamophobia varied considerably from one another. The central themes that emerged from their collective experiences center around instances of discrimination, identity and ethnic affiliations, as well as thoughts on current events involving the United States and South Asia. I will now expand on each of these areas by presenting some of the lived experiences of these 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Americans.

*Recollections.* The various experiences with post 9/11 discrimination for 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans tend to vary quite considerably from one another. Aisha and Nora, who's families have Muslim backgrounds, never experienced anything personally, but knew of several incidents that had occurred to South Asian men they knew in college. In the following passage, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Aliya describes her own lack of experience with discrimination following 9/11.

It has not affected me it in any big way. You know I do hear little comments. But you know most people don't think of me as a Muslim... because I grew up in America and my husband is white. Most of my friends growing up were white, I mean most of everyone around me is white, white high school. I never had Pakistani friends and I was never in a group of Pakistanis, nor am I very religious.

So I think because of these things I never made myself “different”... so I have never really felt any of the impact. But you know, ever since I went to law school and met Indians and Pakistanis, I have heard their stories and it was surprising to me.

Aliya remarks illustrate the role of social networks in identity and the presentation of self. Aliya, who usually wears no clothing connecting her to either Pakistan or Islam, recollects no experience with discrimination directed towards her personally. Despite this, she did express feeling outrage and shock when she did learn of instances of Islamophobia directed towards “middle eastern” men. She further explains,

Sometimes I hear my friends say little comments.... I don't think they realize that I am Pakistani. But most of the comments are directed to Muslims and Arabs. So I guess I don't get as offended since I am not religious. But what makes me mad is how one of my good friends at work is Indian... and he is two years younger than me at Berkeley. And I guess in 2004 he was walking down Bancroft which is in the middle of campus and he got beat up by some people who were yelling for him to go back to his country and calling him a terrorist.

Often, curiosity is the source for many of the interactions that were described by the participants. Unfortunately, several participants' expressed experiences when confronted with hateful and hostile intent disguised as curiosity. Social and occupational classes (Weeden & Grusky 2005) also played a role in type of discrimination or questioning that various participants' recalled. Ansam expressed his knowledge of discrimination against Muslims largely through the lenses of “what he reads in the newspaper.” Despite the protection Ansam describes due to his socio-economic position, he proceeds to recall an experience when he first realized that his ethnicity, race and Muslim name may create negative outcomes for him in the environment of the “war on terror”.

Well I know from reading newspapers, that many brown skinned people or Muslims people... and I have a double whammy, brown skinned and Muslim, have actually experienced discriminations or harassment but I haven't experienced it myself. Now that could be because I am very well protected, I mean I have a middle class job, middle class everything. The one episode I do recall is...I've had the same secretary for 7 years, to whom I've been very helpful to in my work environment, So we had an excellent relationship ...eventually she actually moved on from being my secretary to become a probation officer. So after 9/11 we bumped into each other, hugged each other...embraced and chatted, but in the course of the meeting, she jokingly said "you could be a sleeper"... and she said it very jokingly. Suddenly I realized just how precarious my situation was. That the thought could even have occurred to her ....so for her to say that as a joke, I mean... I don't know how many other people are thinking that...And then what worried me was when people like Daniel Pipes describe "sleepers," so the more loyal I am, the more moral of a citizen I am... the better the "sleeper" I am. So if I got off the boat yesterday, had a big beard and went to the mosque every day, I'm not a "sleeper"... But if I speak fluent English, convert to Christianity; serve my country in the army reserves... it just shows what a good sleeper I am. So there it is, it's actually a very cruel trick that Daniel Pipes has played, because there's, I mean 99.9 percent of South Asians or Muslims are not "sleepers." If they do exist, I imagine they would be in small numbers, statistically speaking. But by raising this issue, it actually creates insecurity and stress and to a vast majority of loyal Americans.

Ansam's passionate expression of his feelings towards the Islamophobic public personalities that continually question the loyalty of Muslim Americans illustrates a central concern that is common among Muslim American youth as well as South Asian immigrant youth. The negotiation of the "hyphen," for South Asians with Muslim backgrounds involves the continuous negotiation of a marginalized identity (Sirin & Fine 2008). Although Ansam's experience represents inter-personal relations, other participants recalled instances of public discrimination from strangers and sometimes even acquaintances. Due to the similarities in the racial composition of South Asians, many non-Muslim South Asian also recalled instances of

discrimination where they were perceived to be Muslim.

Chris recalls a recent incident involving his two younger brothers who are 100% South Asian,

My little brothers, got beat up in San Diego recently, pretty badly. One of my little brothers and his friends hopped on bus thinking it was a regular bus, but it was one of those party buses and right away someone yelled "get off the bus you Fucking terrorists!" So my little brother walked out and those fools got out of the bus... like 10 to 15 of them and chased my brother and his crew down. They rushed them... And they beat the shit out of my brother. Yeah fools are racists. My other brother who really got injured, he just came to break it up and saw my youngest brother getting beat and was trying to pull guy off, right then some big ass guy came a clocked my brother in head and pop he went down...he hit the ground. So yeah it's definitely still out there, fools are hating hardcore still in 2008 or 9 I should say.

Chris expressed strong feelings insisting that xenophobia and Islamophobia are very much alive in the contemporary moment. He then shared some of his personal experiences with discrimination in Los Angeles often at the hands of strangers who are either Black or South Asian.

Even at my work right now... and From my own people... disrespect me all the time, Indians and Black people...Indians who have the features who don't look like terrorists... fair skin, you know, a lot of them fall into the bullshit you know, they have disrespected me before and called me a terrorist. I think they are traitors with that light skin and Black people too. One time, I work at a motel, this brotha, right in front of his girl starts just yelling "I hate these fucking Indians, I hate them, I wish they would all just disappear...and die" ..right in front of his girl but if you say that shit to me in the street you gonna have to fight... but he does it in front of his girl.... they say people take all of this shit out context, they do it when the situation is good for them.

Chris's experience illustrates the nature of post-911 xenophobia with respect to the large numbers of brown ethnicities that are often mistaken for Muslim. Although Chris's religious background is Hindu and Christian, his dark skin coupled with his South Asian

phenotypic features force him to confront several stereotypes, misconceptions, and discrimination. Chris's experiences with discrimination also speak to the complex intersectional inequality inherent in the experiences of multi-racial individuals in societies such as the United States. Chris not only deals with the obvious struggles of being non-white in a white society, he also confronts prejudice, and xenophobia from both the South Asian and African American community. Other 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians expressed other experiences with minor forms of discrimination following 9/11, such as airport security profiling. Razwan recalls,

Well certainly after 9/11, almost every time I flew home I noticed I was always the random person searched at the airport, which didn't even bother me that much because I mean even profiling, I know it's a very controversial topic.... but on the whole I think people engage in profiling all the time and usually people don't have a problem with it... so if somebody robbed a bank and the person who robbed the bank had red hair and then ran away... and a couple of witnesses saw the guy had red hair and it was a big city and they had to keep an eye out for people, presumably they would look out for the guy with red hair and if I had red hair and I hadn't robbed the bank I would sort of expect to get stopped and asked questions. So that's how I've always looked at it, it's tricky because there is a fine line between when it becomes too much and when it starts violating your rights... but in the kind of sort of 5% extra security. I face at the airports, I don't see that as a huge violation of my rights... I saw it more rightly or wrongly, if they think the person who bombed the last plane looks like me... then maybe they will be more careful with me.

Razwan's compliance and acceptance of racial profiling further illustrate the manner in which Islamophobia is routinely justified in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, experiences like the ones just described tend to create complex implications for 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans' in their efforts to constantly negotiate their respective identities while avoiding confrontation.

## Identity Negotiation and Confrontation

The majority of participants expressed several instances of working to avoid confrontation or difficulty when self-identifying their ethnic identities. Often situations in which Islamophobia was present, Pakistani participants chose to identify as Indian over Pakistani in order to feel safe. Many participants also cited the fact that less people knew of Pakistan as a reason for why they might choose to self-identify as Indian. Razwan and Ansam both made it a point to self-identify as “half Indian, half Pakistani” in order to cover the nationalities of both of their parents. I found it interesting that all of the participants with family connections to Pakistan and Islam tended to self-identify as Indian to avoid confrontation or hassles.

I often say I am half Indian and half Pakistani. So originally it was supposed to be a short answer and the one that was most accurate, but now when people ask me what my parents are, and it turns into... I mean when you're half Indian and half Pakistani, it gets people to ask all kind of questions. So I would usually say Pakistani and then actually looking back on it after 9/11 a lot of times depending on who was asking I would sometimes say Indian just because I didn't want to.... I guess.... there is so much anti - Muslim sentiment that a lot of times it is just easier to say Indian depending on who is asking.

Imam discusses his feelings on situation specific scenarios where he is forced to use identification terms to describe his ethnicity. Imam is especially concerned with the underlying connotations associated with the pronunciation of Pakistan. In his view, the typical American English pronunciation carries psychological triggers that imply to him that it is primitive or a “haven for terrorists.” Imam’s use of this dramatized pronunciation is indicated with capitalized letters.

So you know when you meet new people and they are like "What are you, what nationality are you" I immediately attempt to gauge the person's intellect and their level of ignorance and if I feel the person is very ignorant I will say I am Indian...like the computer Indian or dot Indian not the spear chucking Indian. Because Indian is more well known it's easier to kind of... oh ok, But when you say Pakistani... then people will say "what? P-A-K I S-T-A-N? where the hell is that?...It is really just to avoid confrontation... actually I wish Desi was more well known... more of a well known term like Latin cause say I was from some obscure Latin country and someone asked me what I was, I would just say I am Latin.

The various hassles associated with the negotiation of identity were expressed by a number of participants. With respect to the Pakistani participants, the role of their Islamic identity coupled with the rising trends of Islamophobia creates a host of issues relating to their interpretations of identity. The effects of post 9/11 discrimination on participants from Muslim families will be further discussed in the following section. Another interesting aspect of the participants' feelings on identification terms was the generally favorable attitudes expressed towards the usage of terms such as South Asian or Desi. Perveen explains, *"I like the term South Asian because it includes everyone. It does not make one group seem better than the other"*. Similar opinions were raised by most of the participants. Imam, who is not a practicing Muslim himself, did mention that he felt that a religious distinction could be important for some South Asians especially from his parents' generation.

Although I like the term Desi, I know many Pakistanis that feel that religion needs to be identified. They might not use Desi because it leaves the question open. For them its either you're an Indian Muslim or Pakistani. So when you say Pakistani it is automatic, but when you say Indian its need to be qualified in terms of identification and representation. How the individual wants to rep themselves... that's is a cool thing that we have these kinds of choices ...it is a transition period and its our generation that will define these terms and provide meanings to these

simple everyday things of assimilation and integration., Because it is our generation that will provide the foundation for future generations to walk on in America.

Imam's awareness of his generation's role in establishing the significance of identification terms such as Desi, and Pakistani-American, illustrates the influence that the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation has on the general discourse thus far on South Asians in America. Although the majority of participants acknowledged varying preferences in terms of identifying labels and how closely these tied them to the Sub-Continent, the majority of participants had varying levels of fondness for South Asian popular culture something to which, again, their parents were more directly tied.

Although the Indian participants all expressed various experiences with post 9/11 discrimination, those participants with family connections to Pakistan and Islam all experienced instances where identity negotiation was context or situation specific. Of the Pakistani participants, all five recalled instances when they felt the need to ethnically affiliate themselves with India in order to avoid confrontation or other uncomfortable situations. Other Pakistani participants expressed instances where their levels of acquaintance would determine whether or not they identified as Pakistani or Indian. Two of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani Americans explained how they would say "Indian" depending on their level of friendship or the tone of the person's voice when asking. The Pakistani participants who expressed the need to affiliate with India in order to avoid confrontation also felt that the recent surge in media attention given to Pakistan was contributing to the general public's awareness of Pakistan. It should be noted that the

same participants also felt that the circumstances in which America is learning about Pakistan were tragic and unrepresentative of the whole population. In some cases the rising negative media focus on Pakistan was forcing some 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani-Americans to further distance themselves from their Muslim identities.

Despite the case where some Pakistani participants expressed the need to downplay their Islamic backgrounds, another participant felt the need to openly discuss and promote her Islamic ethnicity. Nora, a non-religious 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani-American attorney describes her intentions to spark dialogue among her acquaintances.

I guess I call myself Muslim all the time even though I don't practice. Especially with the 9/11 stuff, I say it even more because I like it when my friends see that side of Islam and they know me and think that I am Muslim. I feel that balances out all of the terrorist stuff on the news every day.

Nora's effort to enlighten the members of her social network illustrates the courageous role following 9/11 that many Muslims in America have played in promoting interfaith dialogues and projects in order to help the larger society understand the diversity of thoughts and practices within Islam. Nora's experience with the term Muslim as a means of ethnic identification also provides insights into the post 9/11 racialization of Islam and Muslims in the United States (Sirin & Fine 2008). Furthermore, her efforts to represent an alternative version of Islam are a means by which she encourages curiosity while contributing to the diversity of practices inherent among 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Muslim Americans.

## U.S. Foreign Policy and South Asia

For a variety of reasons, all participants expressed somewhat similar opinions with regards to the ongoing tragic events in contemporary South Asia. Due to the increasing instability in South Asia resulting from religious fundamentalism, nationalisms, and foreign imperialism, many participants had strong feelings towards events such as the Mumbai attacks in late 2008, as well as the Gujrat massacre of 2002. Although participant responses varied to a certain degree, all eight participants rejected rising trends of nationalism in Pakistan and India. None of the eight participants expressed any feelings towards the ongoing conflicts in Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. Another interesting similarity among participants was their collective general attitudes towards the United States' mission and goals in South Asia. Although some participants expressed outrage towards certain U.S. tactics, all eight approved of the United States goals in Afghanistan in regards to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Despite the participants' ethnic and family ties to the region, all eight participants tended to have views and opinions that were very much in line with mainstream American views on South Asia in general. Some of the participants' thoughts on current events will now be illustrated through a few examples of their personal narratives.

Many of the interviews were conducted in the months immediately following the Mumbai attacks in late 2008. The general consensus in India that Pakistani based Islamic extremists were primarily responsible fueled the fires of religious zealots and nationalists alike. In dramatic contrast, most of the participants' expressed feelings of universal

sorrow towards the victims of the violence. In addition, most participants also questioned their parents' notions of divisive Indian or Pakistani nationalisms. Nora explains how national identity and motherland politics do not affect her as a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani American in contrast to her parents.

Events in South Asian don't affect me the same. I think I can see how our parents who defined themselves as Pakistani and view Indians as a different country, different people; But for me I've had a few close friends who are Indian or Arab and we would always laugh at it and think nothing of it. We considered our selves the same. So when I heard about those Mumbai attacks, I didn't see it as a divide... just as an attack on people.... our part of the world is kind of a mess right now.

Nora's feelings towards the Mumbai attacks coupled with her rejection of South Asian religious and political divisions illustrate a common pan-national and ethnic orientation common among the participants. In general, all eight participants opposed the types of religious nationalism that has been attributed to many of the recent attacks within Pakistan and India. Naveen's remarks help provide an example of the common attitude towards the need to look at the overall picture in regards to South Asia.

It is troubling. Despite the great economic gains that these countries have made, the large wealth disparities between the rich and poor allow these countries to breed very fanatical groups of people who are often courted and encouraged by religious and political leaders, whether it be the BJP-supported Hindutva groups in India that carried out the Gujrat Massacre or the Pakistani ISI-trained Lashkar-e-Taiba organization that has been linked to the Mumbai bombings. Like in many parts of the world, the class inequalities breed violence and division.

Pakistani participants in the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation also questioned the historical legitimacy of partition and whether their prior generations were correct in seeking nationhood. This

opinion is illustrated in the following alarming passage from Imam, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani American.

I go back and forth, because it's something I have contemplated a lot. The existence of the Pakistani state. Is it a legitimate state, is it better off in non-existence. I don't know. I think in the long run they all be better off as one country, one India including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. But the conflict is so deep. Ultimately, I think if India nukes Pakistan they will wipe Pakistan off the map... and if Pakistan nukes India they are barely going to touch a little piece of India, India is so vast and so huge compared to Pakistan. In the end they will need to pool their resources in order to survive.

Other participants expressed understanding with regards to the history of grievances between Pakistan and India as well as Muslims and Hindus. Chris explains how conflicts run deep and are often difficult to resolve because of history. *“Motherland Politics will always affect people over here... if you feel the pain of your mother's grandparents, great grandparents, you are gonna have strong feelings on the conflict.”* Despite Chris's understanding of the reasons why Indians and Pakistani take issue with each other, he also rejected rising trends of nationalism and divisive religious fervor following the Mumbai attacks. In addition, to the participants' general mainstream views towards South Asian current events, participants were aware of their personal connections.

Naveen explains,

Even though the events do not affect me directly, I do worry about the safety of my relatives in South Asia. With the people I know here in the States, we are all pretty much above the nationalism that consumes our parents' generation. The events affect me more than an average American, but since my life is no different than an average American, it is not something I dwell on too long.

Other participants expressed similar thoughts on the low levels of impact felt by the 1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation with regards to events in South Asia. Imam explains how when South

Asia is viewed via television, a type of de-sensitization occurs for the viewer when confronted with violence and despair.

The events don't affect me. Not at all, I mean they will put my dad in a bad mood, but it doesn't really affect us because we are outside the "box" looking at them. Whenever you're in that situation you are overlooking certain things and judging from the outside.

In addition to their 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation attitudes towards South Asian nationalism and division, all eight participants also expressed a variety of levels of support for the United States' goals and missions in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Naveen explains his position on the U.S. government's role in South Asia.

I think the U.S. was right in going into Afghanistan to dismantle the Taliban and disrupt Al Qaeda's operations there. However, I think the Bush administration made a huge mistake in then turning its efforts towards Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11, rather than focusing efforts on capturing Bin Laden, securing peace and stability, and rebuilding Afghanistan. I've always been against the Iraq war. I do think the U.S. has to bring stability to Afghanistan, It is long overdue. Especially when you think about the 1980's and the Soviet stuff. I just saw that movie Charlie Hunters War, and in the end they show you this lone senator asking for funding to re-build and educate Afghanistan and George Bush Sr., just looks at him and says "Hasn't that Afghanistan thing been over for 2 years?" It is just sad because if the U.S. had stayed and re-built the country and invested in education, the Taliban would have never came to power and we may not be in the mess were in.

Other participants also expressed similar views in regards to terrorism and the America's fight against religious extremists. Imam, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani- American explains his support for U.S. military action in South Asia.

Well those people in the North-West of Pakistan how are you going to deal with them. I mean a lot of conflict comes from those groups. Going back to the genetic pools...that pool is very vicious... they don't lose wars. As long as those groups operated the way it is they will continue to create fighters. They have to be dealt with.

Nora, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Pakistani American also expressed support for the United States' goals in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It should be noted that the five Pakistani participants were all quite critical of all religious fundamentalists. In addition, none of the participants felt personal cultural connections to Afghanistan as was highlighted earlier. Nora explains her view in relation to her Pakistani mother who does somewhat identify with Afghani .

Well I know they need to do something in Afghanistan and Pakistan...and I know there are people there causing problems. Most of my info comes from my parents and so when I ask my mom, and get her opinion, I know she is more defensive about the U.S. doing anything in that area than I would be, just because she sees it more as her home. Even she feels that there are certain groups that need to be weeded out and that they are teaching extreme theories. Now the tactics that we use to do that, I don't know about, I don't how things will play out but I think the change we have now is probably good.

Nora's views are similar with other participants with regards to supporting the overall U.S. agenda while simultaneously questioning certain U.S. tactics such as civilian casualties and torture. Regardless of national or religious background, all eight participants expressed views on South Asia that are very much in line with mainstream American discourse. In addition, all eight participants' expressed support for the United States missions in Afghanistan and the tribal regions within Pakistan. These views and their similarities with mainstream American discourse further illustrate the levels of assimilation within the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian American participants.

With respect to the overall South Asian American population, the September 11, 2001 attacks coupled with the ensuing "war on terror" have impacted the lives of South Asians in a number of ways. Several of the participants expressed instances of

discrimination and prejudice. Acts of discrimination characteristic of Islamophobia were directed towards Muslim, Hindu and Christian South Asians due to the racialization of Muslims following 9/11. Those few participants who had not experienced discrimination personally did recollect the experiences of other South Asian acquaintances who had suffered from Islamophobia. With respect to the growing literature on the “life course” perspective (Hutchinson 2007), the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with rising Islamophobia in Western societies may very well be an important “life course” impact event that will need to be addressed in future social and behavioral scientific research pertaining to South Asian Americans.

## IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Segmented Assimilation

The pool of participants selected for this study reflected the diverse array of occupational and class stratification within the contemporary South Asian American community. Following Monish Das Gupta's (2006) description of a realistic view of South Asian occupation diversity which includes domestic workers, store clerks, and cab drivers as well as doctors, engineers and lawyers, my participant pool somewhat succeeded in capturing this dynamic. The participants reflected instances where classic assimilation theory (Brown & Bean 2006) finds some validity in terms of the subsequent generations' increased class trajectories. In these cases, cultural assimilation was also present with regards to some participant's lack of knowledge or interest in South Asian cultures. Among the five highly educated participants, although race and ethnicity posed certain challenges, they all expressed a high degree of identification with American culture. Even within this small sample we see a variety of assimilation trajectories for these South Asian American participants.

In addition to the five participants whose parents were highly educated or professionals, the other three participants' immigrant parents fall into Rumbaut's (1994) "entrepreneur" immigrant category. Working in the motel or convenience store industry is in some cases a stigmatized occupation within in the more mainstream affluent South Asian community (Das Gupta 2006). In the cases of the two participants who currently

worked in the motel industry, a sense of resentment was expressed towards highly successful South Asians who perpetuate the image of the “model minority.” Imam’s expression of his doubts regarding his income potential illustrate increasing pressures for young South Asians to measure up to the success of their immigrant parents. The occupational class differences between entrepreneurs and professionals can have serious implications for earning inequality (Weeden & Grusky 2005, Rumbaut 1994). From the highly educated participants in the sample it is clear that their parents’ educational and profession circles played important roles in the children’s success. The lack of this social capital may influence the outlooks and views of the participants in entrepreneurial occupations. This occupational diversity among the “new second generation” further highlights the numerous paths and trajectories of assimilation experienced by South Asian immigrants who arrived largely during the “second epoch.”

Another important aspect of the assimilation patterns represented in the sample pertains to the role of language. None of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants were able to speak or understand their parents’ native languages. However, the two 1.5 generation participants who were born in South Asia did speak their family languages. With respect to South Asian Americans we find a number of factors that play into whether or not the native language is maintained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. Some of the pressures to adopt a “English” only orientation are compounded with the cultural racism that is often perpetuated in the media towards South Asians as well as any other group thought of as an “other” (Sirin & Fine 2008). Much of the cultural racism directed toward South Asians often involves religion.

In addition to language, overall low levels of religiosity among the participants highlighted an interesting finding with regard to 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. Despite the past arguments of scholars such as Samuel Huntington (1993), who claim that Muslim and other non-Judeo-Christian societies are fundamentalist by nature, our participants tended to have low levels of religiosity and in many ways reflected the Pew Research Center (2007) findings with regards to Muslim and Christian identities in the United States. The Center reported that a majority of Muslim Americans shared similar secular views on religious identities with American Christians. All participants in the study were against religious fundamentalism whether it is Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Jewish. This followed in line with general mainstream American views towards religious fundamentalism. The low levels of religiosity among the “new second generation” are yet another indicator highlighting differences between new second generation South Asian Americans and their immigrant parents.

#### Pan-Ethnic Affiliations

Following other research concerning Asian pan ethnicity, (Park 2008, Okamoto 2003) many of the participants cited university or professional environments as the primary spaces for the development of pan-ethnic identities. Among the participants who had experienced predominately white upper class networks, higher education and professional environments served as the initial space for socializing with other South Asians. Despite the role of higher education and professional environments, three of the less educated entrepreneurial participants also expressed strong pan-ethnic affiliations

between India and Pakistan. The opinions toward the common “Desi” culture expressed by Chris and Imam also tended to follow suit with the more educated participants who mentioned places like law school serving as a primary space for pan-ethnic identity development.

The pan-South Asian identity that is referred to with the term “Desi” has many dynamics and multiple meanings that still need to be addressed. Although, the pan-identities conveyed in the term South Asian are generally reflective of immigrants in the West, certain intersections and subtle contradictions are becoming apparent among some elements in the Desi community within the United States. Michael Hansen’s qualitative work (2006) looking at the MTV Desi network’s reverse globalization and Desi identity in America, illustrates these contradictions regarding identity and ethnic affiliations. Some of the South Asian participants in Hansen’s study who identified themselves as Indian-American disagreed with connotations of “Desi” as referring to pan-ethnic South Asian identity (Hansen 2006). This finding highlighted the drastic political and power relations that often support a Indian and Hindu hegemony that is central in the geopolitics of the Sub-Continent. That being said, none of the participants in this study shared that sentiment. All eight participants agreed that “Desi” was a term that encompassed both Indians and Pakistanis. This notion of the cross-appropriation of ‘Desi’ illustrates how languages and cultures can often mix in the path of global flows and disjuncture. These heterogeneous flows can lead to a hybridization of South Asian cultures (Hansen 2006, Appadurai 1996). In many ways, the participants interviewed shared a hybridized view of Indian and Pakistani cultures. It is important to also note that

participants expressed different opinions with regards to whether Desi extended to other South Asian nations such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or Afghanistan.

With respect to Afghanistan, many of the participants felt that Afghani culture was different from Indian or Pakistani culture. Asam, the only participant with a command of Indian history disagreed and included Afghanistan in his interpretation of Desi due to the British inclusion of Afghanistan. The issue of Afghanistan and whether or not participants felt it should be included within Desi culture was also interesting given the overall mainstream views of the participants towards fundamentalism and the “Taliban” in particular. All eight participants expressed approval of United States foreign policy towards Afghanistan. This will be further discussed shortly. For the most part, all participants were in agreement of a shared pan-ethnic culture between India and Pakistan that transcends the national boundaries of origin. The term Desi and its use among the “new second generation” creates interesting pan-ethnic affiliations for Indians and Pakistanis that may challenge traditional beliefs held by their respective immigrant parents. Furthermore, the multiple identities and ethnicities combined in the South Asian American community are critical to understand and account for in order to accurately use the term Desi with regards to academics. In addition, the increasing frequency of religious discrimination in Judeo-Christian societies in the post-9/11 era may have a strong effect on the dynamics of South Asian identity within these same societies.

## Identity Negotiation

Working off Stuart Hall's (1997) interpretations of the fluidity of identity, we find several instances among the participants where they consciously negotiated their respective identities in everyday social interactions. Labels and terms are often the means by which immigrants negotiate identities based on the dynamic of any given social environment or situation (Phinney & Ong 2007). Many Pakistani participants often invoked an Indian identity in order to avoid complications or confrontation. The act of Pakistani's identifying as Indian in order to avoid the automatic connections to Islam illustrate an important aspect of Islamophobia and how this type of subtle discrimination can greatly influence South Asian American identity negotiation (Maira 2004). In other cases, Pakistani participants elected to assume an Indian identity in order to avoid complications in informal interpersonal interactions with strangers or weak acquaintances. It should be noted that the Pakistani participants who claimed Indian identities tended to do so only in the company of strangers. In the cases of family or close friends, all participants tended to identify with more specificity. Some participants also identified with pan-ethnic identities such as South Asian or "Desi" in some cases.

The inclination to view their own identities in terms of a pan-ethnic affiliation between Indians and Pakistani's is an important characteristic of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians. Their willingness to transcend the national boundaries and division of their immigrant parents reflect similar findings concerning pan-ethnicity among East Asian groups (Park 2008, Okamoto 2003). The high levels of pan-ethnicity present in the

individual identity negotiations of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans illuminate the ability for the “new second generation” to provide spaces for dialogue and understanding that may ultimately influence transnational networks in communities within South Asia as well as the United States.

### Discrimination and U.S. Foreign Policy in South Asia

Many of the contemporary popular attitudes towards South Asian Americans are regrettably similar to the anti-Asian fervor characteristic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Das Gupta 2006, Maira 2004). The aforementioned relationships between public opinion, the Federal government and immigration policies responsible for historically controlling Chinese and Japanese immigration have now re-emerged focusing on Muslim and South Asian immigration (Sirin & Fine 2008; Das Gupta 2006; Maira 2004). Due to the large numbers of Muslims in the South Asian community, many issues surrounding South Asian immigrant communities are affected by these policies. The contemporary moment or “third epoch” of South Asians in America is a volatile time for 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians who are continually confronted with challenges to their respective negotiations of identity. The issues surrounding identity are further compounded by the post 9/11 atmosphere of interpersonal confrontational curiosity and discriminatory domestic policies. The contemporary experiences of South Asians in America are also complicated with the variety of challenges and obstacles facing U.S. foreign policy agendas in South Asia. The lived experiences of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian

Americans reflect a precarious example of Sirin and Fine's (2008) notion of "life on the hyphen."

All of the participants in the study reported instances of discrimination or racism following September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Although some participants were never victims themselves, they still recalled stories relating to other South Asians they knew. Interestingly, none of the female participants reported being the victims of direct discrimination. This was in direct contrast to the male participants who reported a variety of instances of discrimination including workplace harassment, airport profiling and even physical abuse. Some of the increased discriminatory attention directed towards South Asian males can certainly be attributed to the hyper racialization and stereotypical portrayals of Muslim and Muslim looking men in the mass media (Sirin & Fine 2008, Maira 2004).

The degree with which male participants felt that they had been discriminated against was somewhat influenced by their occupation and class standing. The older psychiatrist along with one of the law students reported no direct discrimination other than increased security at airports. In the course of their interviews they repeatedly cited their class position as a "sense" of security or protection with regards to overt discrimination. Other male participants, such as Imam and Chris, reported several instances of direct overt racism in their work environments. The occupational class distinctions between motel workers and professional may influence the degree with which South Asians are subjected to overt discrimination. Of course in this case, the numerical realities of this sample cannot be applied to the general population. 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup>

generation South Asian Americans have experienced a wide variety of interactions in the years following 9/11. Although many of these interactions are positive by nature, there is an alarming trend of xenophobia and discrimination displayed towards South Asians as well as other Muslim or simply “Muslim looking” groups.

The effects of this type of covert and overt forms of discrimination and dehumanization are overwhelming detrimental to the process of secure South Asian ethnic identity formation. Numerous studies reveal that individuals from marginalized groups are exposed to stress as a result of their social, ethnic or political status (Sirin & Fine 2008). Sirin and Fine’s research concerning Muslim American youth explains how 60 percent of the participants in their study reported that they experienced discrimination at school, the setting where they were mistreated the most, and the remainder reported being mistreated when they were shopping, that is, in public spaces”(Sirin & Fine 2008:86). Although, the degrees of discrimination varied among the South Asian participants, class standing certainly played a role in the experiences of the participants. Regardless of the incident, it is also clear that 9/11 and the ensuing Islamophobia serve as an important “life-course” changing event for several 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans.

Elizabeth Hutchinson’s (2007) notion of the “life-course” perspective where social scientists take into account chronological time, transition events, and social change when understanding individuals, is an excellent example of the significance that 9/11 plays in the psyche of many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. September 11<sup>th</sup> and the Islamophobia that followed are important life-course events that will need to

be taken into account whenever social scientist attempt to research this understudied population.

Much of the anti-Muslim discrimination described above is often directed towards all South Asians regardless of their religious backgrounds. Of the non-Muslim participants in the study, all reported instances where they were perceived as Muslim and discriminated against. Much of this xenophobia lies in the racial formation or racialization of Islam in the United States. Omi and Winant's (1994) notion of racial formation projects is certainly applicable to the public reaction following the September 11 attacks. This racialization of Islam created several dilemmas for several non-Muslim ethnicities such as Sikhs, Mexicans, and other non-white groups. For those individuals who openly express their Islamic heritage or faith, the degree of discrimination was much more intense (Sirin & Fine 2008). The role of the mass media as well as government policy both foreign and domestic also contributes to the overall racialization of Islam and Muslims in America. Due to the close connections between 9/11 and the ensuing U.S. foreign policy, many of the contemporary conflicts in South Asia have also impacted 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans.

*U.S. and South Asia.* Despite some participants' experiences with discrimination and xenophobia, all eight participants were quite supportive of the United States' official foreign policy in South Asia. With respect to the eight-year-old war in Afghanistan, all participants regardless of religious or nationality opposed the Taliban and supported the U.S. military campaign against Al-Queada. All five Pakistani participants were supportive of the need to address the growing militancy in the Pakistani Federally

Administered Tribal Areas. Due to the relatively recent 2008 Mumbai bombings, all of the participants expressed strong condemnations of religious extremism and terrorism. The general views of the participants with regards to terrorism and U.S. military intervention were quite supportive of the United States' position and past actions. It should be noted that all eight participants also expressed frustration with the Bush administrations' decision to invade Iraq as opposed to focusing military effort on Al-Qaeda. Once again, the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian participants echoed the sentiment of many mainstream Americans.

The "new second generation" South Asian American community represents a diverse and complex group of individuals who in many ways verify as well challenge the prevailing theoretical work on immigration, inequality and identity studies. With regards to the dynamics of segmented assimilation, we find that 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans occupy diverse positions in the overall stratification of South Asian American communities. The narratives of this group of participants also illustrate a non-religious and secular style of religious identity that is similar to the Pew (2007) study regarding levels of religiosity among all Americans. The role of religion with regards to identity negotiation is also reflected in the process of securing a pan-ethnic identity. Due to many of the participants' low levels of religiosity, religious based identities as reported in research pertaining to Muslims (Bayoumi 2008, Peek 2005) were less frequent among the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans in this study. The lack of religious identities was also reflected in participants' embracing of pan-ethnic identities. The willingness to assume a pan-South Asian identity was strongest among Pakistani

participants who often felt pressures to avoid confrontation or other uncomfortable situations. The pressures and comfort associated with South Asian identity negotiation are also very much interrelated to post 9/11 Islamophobia as well as the United States current and long term goals in South Asia.

Interestingly, all participants were strongly opposed to rising South Asian nationalisms following the rising instability in the region. In addition, all participants rejected religious extremism and were quite supportive of U.S. military goals with regards to Afghanistan and the tribal regions of Pakistan. The contemporary issues and concerns for the United States with regards to South Asia are illuminated in the thoughts and opinions of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. Contrary to conservative pundits who follow the reasoning of Samuel Huntington, South Asian Muslim and Hindu Americans share many of the opinions and viewpoints of Western societies with regards to religious fundamentalism. The “new second generation” South Asian American community is an exemplary demographic group that can provide for insightful social scientific inquiry pertaining to immigrant assimilation, ethnic identity, as well as South Asian geo-politics.

## CONCLUSION

### The New Second Generation

The “new second generation” South Asian American community represents one component of the overall population. Present day South Asian American communities are comprised of a complex array of classes, races, ethnicities, nationalities, and religions. Furthermore, any given South Asian immigrant community can contain legal or illegal immigrants, transnational migrant workers, natural citizens, visitors, or students. Notions of assimilation within South Asian communities are increasingly convoluted and rather segmented. Despite the experiences of classic assimilation championed by mainstream South Asian immigrants, we find several sub-groups of 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asians (for instance, Muslims, gay-queer-transgender-bisexuals, domestic workers, victims of motel owners, taxi cab drivers) who through their marginalization, experience a rather bumpy or segmented assimilation. South Asian immigrants in America have consistently challenged a variety of assimilation models throughout their history. With respect to the Third Epoch of South Asian immigration, we find a variety of immigrant experiences that in many ways transcend the traditional models used to analyze immigrant assimilation. In addition to racial barriers confronting South Asian assimilation, the recent xenophobia directed toward cultural and religious/ethnic groups considered outside the realm of Judeo-Christian society further complicate the South Asian immigrant experience of balancing cultural identities within mainstream American

culture. For many South Asians, the cultural and religious differences have in many ways been “racialized” so that many of these immigrants are now designated as “others” who are increasingly stereotypically associated with religious fundamentalists and terrorists.

The sweeping realignments and restructuring of the Federal government’s immigration departments have signaled a return to the pre-1965 era where legal policies are once again based on ethnicity, religion and national origin. The consolidation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into the Department of Homeland Security has also ushered in an era of secrecy and terrorism oriented policy with regards to all matters pertaining to immigration. The creation of the 24 nation list of Muslim majority countries deemed “Al Queada” nations has seriously affected Muslim South Asian immigration from nations such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. Furthermore, these prohibitive measures targeting nations such as Pakistan and Bangladesh have created a number of pressures within South Asian communities in the United States. These pressures certainly affect transnational migrants, students, and other South Asians who aspire to immigrate to the United States. Many of these new policies which have resulted from the post-9/11 government and public efforts to secure the nation have also affected South Asian-American communities in terms of ethnic affiliations, religious expression, political activism, and Sub-continental politics.

Domestic efforts to fight “terrorism” through immigration are also compounded with the conflicts and events in India, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Acts of terrorism within India and Pakistan, coupled with the ongoing U.S. attacks inside Pakistani territory, have affected South Asians in their home and host countries. Some of the rising divisions

within South Asian immigrant communities pose a myriad of complications and challenges for academics concerned with South Asian immigration and assimilation. Contemporary South Asian immigration is deeply affected by the current global economic crisis, contemporary immigration policy as well as geo-political actions in the Sub-continent region. Furthermore, the recent nuclear agreement between the United States and India as well as the increasingly instability in Pakistan have contributed to the confrontational rhetoric that has engulfed many cities in Pakistan and India. When considering the dynamics within the South Asian immigrant population in America it becomes increasingly difficult to discount Sub-continental politics and the varying effects among immigrants and their children here in the United States.

At the same time, the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation are living in a time when contemporary popular attitudes towards South Asian immigration are regrettably similar to the anti-Asian fervor characteristic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is framed now, however, in an anti-Muslim framing that is becoming “racialized” and attributed to all groups originating from the Sub-continent. The aforementioned relationships between public opinion, the Federal government and immigration policies responsible for controlling immigration have now re-emerged focusing on Muslim immigration. Due to the large numbers of Muslims in the South Asian community, many issues surrounding South Asian immigration are affected by these policies. The tone and targeting of Muslim immigrants has created several problems for South Asian communities. Muslim South Asian Immigrants seeking family re-unification or asylum are now confronted with a scrutinized and biased process that in many ways aims to limit the total number of

Muslim and South Asians entering the United States. All of these pressures affect the experiences of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation participants that I interviewed.

This research has illustrated the varying dynamics regarding assimilation, pan-ethnic identity, religiosity, and support for U.S. foreign policy among 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. This “new second generation” possesses many of the same views and opinions that are representative of mainstream America. In addition, 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans also experience a host of challenges posed by living out a hyphenated identity that can sometimes simultaneously pull individuals in multiple directions or trajectories. Whether or not 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian American follow the classic straight line model of assimilation or fall into stagnant or downward assimilation is often related to the occupational class and social capital of the immigrant parents. Despite the important roles of social and human capital in determining the trajectories of the “new second generation” many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans share similar views on notions of pan-ethnicity.

Although professional and higher education environments play an important role in the development of a pan-ethnic identity, this research illustrates that collective interpretations of identity among the “new second generation” often transcend the national, class and religious divisiveness that is characteristic of their immigrant parents’ generation. Regardless of occupational or social class, many 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans express feelings of South Asian pan-solidarity between Pakistan and India. Interestingly enough, the two nations’ geo-political hegemony in the region is reproduced in participants’ reluctance to include other nations such as Afghanistan,

Nepal, or Sri Lanka into their definitions of pan-ethnic terms such as South Asia or “Desi.” The levels of pan-ethnicity among 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans may also be related with low levels of religiosity. Due the emphasis placed on religious distinctions in South Asia, it is not surprising that the relatively secular 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation openly embrace and welcome notions of pan-ethnic solidarity.

#### Future Research

Sociological inquiry pertaining to South Asian Americans encounters a variety of definitions pertaining to citizenship, pan-ethnicity, race, religion and gender. In the context of post 9/11, the need for new theories on assimilation that are more attentive to nuances of power and state intervention are quite necessary. Despite the surge in scholarship addressing the South Asian second generation’s collective sense of identity as understood in the collective consumption of South Asian mass media (Oullette 2008, Hansen 2006, Sharma 2005, Govind 2004, Maira 1999), the increasing hostilities towards Muslims in the Sub-continent as well as in the United States may impact and complicate South Asian American identity negotiation. For the purposes of South Asian American research, the dramatic changes in immigration policy in conjunction with the heightened government secrecy around immigration affairs necessitates an extensive re-examination of contemporary immigration studies. It is critical that immigration research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century takes into account the overarching changes in the Federal governments’ attitude towards immigrants and how these changes are presented to the public as the means to achieve greater national security. Where in the past, immigration laws may have targeted groups such as Chinese or Japanese immigrants based on perceived economic threats, in

the third epoch efforts to control and curtail non Judeo-Christian immigration based on notions of national security pose several challenges for South Asian immigration as well as assimilation for subsequent generations.

Another challenge facing social researchers concerned with 21<sup>st</sup> century South Asian immigrant communities is the lack of transparency in all Department of Homeland Security (DHS) actions and investigations. Due to the complete secrecy in which all immigration proceedings from so-called “Al-Queada Countries” now occur access to data such as deportation statistics, reasons for Visa denials, or court case documents is virtually impossible. Without empirical data to assess the actions of the DHS with regards to immigration, researchers are confronted with severe lapses of information that are pertinent to understanding the Third Epoch of South Asian immigration in the United States. In order for immigration scholars to accurately capture the lived experiences of this unique immigrant group, extensive in depth research that accounts for the diversity and variations within the South Asian immigrant community is imperative. The focus of these types of endeavors should be intergenerational with a specific focus on the “new second generation.” This group of younger South Asian Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may provide some of the most interesting insights into the nature of segmented assimilation coupled with the Federal government’s security-first approach to immigration. Additionally, comparative analyses of occupational class, education, religiosity, and political/social activism may further provide empirical insights into the complexities of South Asians in contemporary America.

As we approach the end of the first decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we find the nature of immigration within the United States to be in an extremely volatile state. Due to economic uncertainties and under the guise of national security, the Department of Homeland Security has managed to re-write immigration laws and policies in a manner reminiscent of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to the exclusion laws barring Asian immigration over a century ago, the post 9/11 immigration policies are in many ways designed to target and control the flow of “non-desirable” immigrants in the United States. These policies in practice affect hundreds of immigrants belonging to countless ethnic groups, nationalities, and races. Furthermore, the end of the decade is characterized with uncertainty and volatility most noticeable in recent global economic upheavals as well as the election of the first Black U.S. President who happens to have a Muslim immigrant for a father. With regards to South Asian immigration as well as immigration studies in general, scholars will have to continually document and inquire into the experiences of immigrant groups in 21<sup>st</sup> century America.

Due to the negative historical trends that have often accompanied economic downturn in America, social scientists as well as activists will need to closely examine immigrant interactions between the Federal government, native citizens, and among other immigrant ethnicities. In these future endeavors, the South Asian American community will continue to provide meaningful insights into the dynamics of immigrant assimilation, pan-ethnicity and identity, as well as the collective effects of 21<sup>st</sup> century xenophobia and discrimination. The historical nature of South Asian communities to adapt and flourish in

hostile foreign environments is a testament to a resilience and resolve that will be instrumental in the lived experiences of the “new second generation”.

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## APPENDIX A

### HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

#### Consent to Act As Research Subject

This study involves research conducted by Humboldt State University Graduate Student, Ali R Chaudhary. The purpose of this research is to gather information regarding ethnic affiliations among 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. The procedure that will be used is a key-informant interview. The P.I listed below will conduct an oral interview that goes through a series of questions. The interview will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete. Interviews may be conducted in person and/or by phone. If they are conducted by phone, informants will be provided with a copy of the key-informant interview form to sign. Confidentiality will be maintained because names will not be associated with interviews; they will be coded by number, and kept in a locked filing cabinet during the course of the study. Once the study is completed (within one year) the interviews will be destroyed. Additionally, the results will be presented in aggregate form to protect the information given by key-informants.

I understand that the procedures described involve the following possible risks and/or discomforts and that they have possible benefits. Risk: No possible risk. Benefit: Will provide a better understanding of the pertinent issues of ethnicity surrounding 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian Americans. The procedures will be conducted at a variety of locations dependent on the convenience and preference of participants. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

If you have any questions about this research please contact:  
Ali R Chaudhary, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA 95521  
Phone (707) 599-0561, FAX (707) 826-3403 E-Mail: [arc16@humboldt.edu](mailto:arc16@humboldt.edu)

I hereby agree to have the following person(s) carry out the following procedures on me for experimental purposes: Ali R Chaudhary, MA Candidate

This information was explained to me by Ali R Chaudhary

I understand that he/she will answer any questions I may have concerning this investigation or the procedures at any time. I also understand that my participation in any study is entirely voluntary and that I may decline to enter this study or may withdraw from it at any time without jeopardy.

All Interviews Will be Conducted by Ali R Chaudhary  
Compensation:

I understand that my payment for participation in this investigation is \$0  
If I do not complete this study, I will receive:

I am not receiving any compensation for participating in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_Date

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Schedule

1. Which racial classification term do you identify with more, Asian American or South Asian American?
2. How would you define your ethnicity?
3. Does your ethnic identity ever change or is it fixed?
4. What other nationalities or ethnicities do you consider to be “Desi”?
5. Are there any South Asian ethnicities that you consider not to be culturally “Desi”?
6. What other nationalities or ethnicities do you consider to be South Asian?
7. Do you enjoy South Asian media( Bollywood movies, Bangrah music, South Asian satellite TV)
8. Do you attend Bangrah music parties or clubs? What do you think about the Bangrah club craze?
9. What music do you like?
10. Did you or any of your family subscribe to cable channel MTV Desi, the year of its debut?
11. How did the station make you feel with regards to a South Asian cultural identity? How did the removal of MTV Desi a year later affect you?
12. Are you ever perceived as a Muslim in your everyday lives? What emotions do these bring up?
13. Does the Anti-Muslim sentiment ever pressure you to affiliate with a certain ethnicity other than your own?

14. What do you think about the treatment of Islam with regards to Barack Obama's supposed ethnicity?

15. Do the religious and ethnic conflicts in the Sub-Continent (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh) affect your interactions with South Asians in America?

16. How do you feel about the recent U.S./India nuclear arms deal?

17. Do you have any thoughts regarding the ongoing conflict in Kashmir?

18. Do you attend or participate in South Asian Independence celebrations? If so which ones and why?

#### FACE SHEET

1. How old are you?
2. What is your family's religious background?
3. Do you practice and identify with your family's religion?
4. When did your immediate family first come to the United States?
5. When did your extended family first immigrate to North America?