

BORDER CROSSINGS AND IMAGINED-NATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF
SOCIO-CULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS OF TWO FEMALE INDIAN GRADUATE
STUDENTS IN THE U.S.

By

KAKALI BHATTACHARYA

(Under the Direction of Kathleen deMarrais)

ABSTRACT

Globalization in its most rudimentary form speaks towards a singular world society. However, with several forms of patriarchal and colonial discourses drawing borders, both physical and figurative, around nations and their people, the current globalized world is anything but a singular world society. Informed by de/colonizing epistemologies, this transnational feminist qualitative case study investigates the material conditions produced by the globalized ordering of the world and its people in the context of higher education in the U.S. The purpose of this research was to examine how two female Indian graduate students new to the U.S. negotiated their initial experiences while beginning their graduate education. The researcher engaged in six months of fieldwork, using participant observations, conversational interviews, and photo- and object-elicitations.

Implementing transnational feminist readings, the findings highlight the changing concepts of “home” through which each participant authored her self-hood in terms of being an Indian outside of India and being part of an under-represented group in the U.S. Moreover, the participants expressed needs to belong to communities of practices where the distinctions between newcomer and oldtimers were blurred. With shifting privileges, participants shuttled between multiple subject positions informed by gendered, national, and colonizing discourses.

Analyzing the movements between multiple subject positions, this study shows the participants' strategic accommodations and resistances, as well as their adherence to and rejection of previously known and newly discovered subject positions.

The substantive implications of this study highlight the need for addressing inequalities faced everyday by international and under-represented students both inside and outside the classrooms of higher education in the U.S. Implications for practice call for internationalizing curriculum and instruction and developing multi-pronged national and global coalitions to learn why and how difference matters based on multiple histories, politics, and knowledges.

Methodologically, this study explores the limits and possibilities of de/colonizing methodologies implemented by an Indian researcher in Western academia. Using and extending Goffman's (1997) front- and back-stage metaphor, data transformation involved disrupting binaries, questioning the researcher's presumptive agency, documenting the contradictions/tensions in findings, and highlighting messy performative acts of the participants' negotiations. This study reinforces feminist discourses about the utility of conversational interviews, and blurs the boundaries between the researcher and the researched. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the need to demonstrate participants' negotiations in their contradictory ways, incorporating several data sources to render a multidimensional re-presentation of the participants. Consequently, this study creates spaces for dialoguing about implementing de/colonizing methods by insider/outsider researchers in Western academia, thereby highlighting the need to further develop alternate de/colonizing qualitative methodologies to capture multiple realities of the participants' lives.

INDEX WORDS: decolonizing epistemologies, transnational feminism, higher education, India

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER 1: ALAAP	1
Imagined Nation(s): (De) Establishing Local and Global World Orders	2
Situating Scholars and Theoretical Frameworks	8
Substantively Speaking	14
Purpose and Research Questions	18
Chapter Summary	19
CHAPTER 2: SRUTI, SMRITI, AND LIPI	21
De/colonizing Epistemologies	22
Configuring Feminism and Transnational Feminism	30
Postcolonialism	47
Transnationalism	58
Higher Education and International Students in the U.S.	65
Higher Education in India	71
Tracing Trajectories: Feminism, Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Higher Education	78
CHAPTER 3: OTHERING RESEARCH, RESEARCHING THE OTHER	81
Research Framework: Decolonizing Epistemologies and Methodologies	83
Theoretical Influence on Methodology	92
Research Design	99
Selection of Participants	104
Research Site(s)	111

Gaining Access	113
Insider-Outsider Positioning: Departing to Fluid Emic and Etic Positions	114
Consent Form and Ethics	117
Data Collection Procedures	120
Data Transformation and Representation	129
Chapter Summary	146
CHAPTER 4: MIRCH MASALA: SHUTTTLING BETWEEN THE FAMILIAR AND	
THE UNFAMILIAR.....	147
Mirch and Masala and the Constant Moving and Being In Between	147
Neerada – A Self Portrait	150
Experiencing the Mirch and the Masala: Neerada’s Negotiations in Multiple Spaces.....	155
Situating Subjectivities and Negotiations of the Plays	198
Chapter Summary	211
CHAPTER 5: MURGI SE MASALA MEHENGHA, LEARNING THE DETAILS	
Learning the Details	213
Yamini – A Self Portrait	216
Learning the Details: Yamini’s Negotiations in Multiple Spaces	222
Situating Subjectivities and Negotiations of the Plays	264
Chapter Summary	285
CHAPTER 6: CROSS-PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS	
Comparing Neerada’s and Yamini’s Negotiations	290
A Note About Spaces	309
CHAPTER 7: SUBJECTS ARE STILL SPEAKING	
	310

Major Findings and Implications	312
REFERENCES	338
APPENDICES	364
Appendix A: Draft of Email Soliciting Participants	364
Appendix B: Draft of Email to Professors Seeking Permission to Observe Participants	365
Appendix C: Taking Stock, Data Inventory	366
Appendix D: Neerada's Negotiations	368

CHAPTER 1: ALAAP¹

It is not until I came to the U.S. that I realized that I am a minority and I come from a backwards country. I did not even realize that I have to think consciously about being an Indian in the U.S. I never had to ever before. It was who I was. But coming to the U.S. have changed the way I think of myself as an Indian.

Yamini, conversation transcript, November 2004

I have realized I am a non-resident alien in the U.S. To think of myself as an alien has been very weird. I suppose I am out of this world. But wait. Given that there are so many aliens in the U.S., it sure seems like an alien invasion.

Neerada, conversation transcript, October, 2004



Having met many female Indian graduate students in the U.S. and witnessed their varied negotiations with multiple cultures, social systems, and expectations, I designed this study to investigate the complex ways women from India cross social and cultural borders drawn around them locally, nationally, and globally. These border crossings can reveal the salient workings of social and cultural norms/expectations and the institutions that uphold and perpetuate them. The material conditions produced by physical and figurative border crossings can indicate the multiple spaces in which female Indian graduate students in the U.S. negotiate their experiences. These spaces can be considered as ‘in-between spaces.’ I use the term ‘in-between space’ to denote a transitional state of existence, shuttling between normative expectations of Indian and U.S. cultures. This notion of in-between space is similar to Victor Turner’s (1967, p. 122) notion of liminal space. Turner describes a liminal space as a third space, not existing in one discrete

¹ *Alaap* is both a Bengali and a Hindi multivalent word denoting introduction to new people, ideas for the first time, meeting, initial conversations, and getting acquainted.

place or another but existing in a space of transition, in a space of in-between-ness. Turner's conceptualization of liminality illustrates the absence of a fixed space and recognizes that being in a transitory state can be a state of permanent existence for some in that "transition [can] become a permanent condition, leading to a paradoxical, almost contradictory institutionalization of liminality" (Turner, 1967, p. 107). Liminality indicates the porousness of borders, a traverse across cultures, disciplines, and structures. People who reside in the liminal space, like international students in U.S., often have to negotiate between similar and dissimilar expectations arising out of their home and foreign cultures in the context of schools, living arrangements, acceptable social behavior, etc. (Baker and Siryk 1984; Bennett 1995; Chen 1996, April; Bettencourt, Charlton et al. 1999; Jackson 2003).

To represent the negotiations in these liminal spaces of multiplicity, this case study was designed to examine the socio-cultural negotiations of two female Indian graduate students who have been in the U.S. for no longer than a year. By looking at their shuttling between multiple physical, temporal, and imagined spaces, I discover ways to unsettle several established theoretical and methodological paradigms. The stories presented in this study are tales of contradictions, ruptures, where categories like Indian, American, us, them, and we are simultaneously blurred and maintained.

Imagined Nation(s): (De) Establishing Local and Global World Orders

This study is designed to unsettle certain dominant paradigms about First and Third Worlds, gender, and Indian women, and to disrupt any binaries that are discursively constructed through imperialistic, and de/colonizing² discourses including transnational feminism, and postcolonialism. This study is situated in the contemporary globalized exchange of culture and

² I use the term de/colonizing to indicate the simultaneous existence of both colonizing and decolonizing discourses in practice.

people across multiple nations. These migratory movements are fertile grounds to create diverse understandings through which people author themselves and the world around them. Such authoring has direct implications for the material conditions of people's lives produced by globalized movements, especially if they live in culturally unfamiliar spaces.

Globalization is a contested term taken up differently by various theoretical frameworks including transnationalism, transnational feminism, and postcolonialism. At a rudimentary level, globalization implies an exchange across national borders. Exchanges can include trades, people, labor, technologies, economies, etc. Corporate globalization, however, demonstrates trends toward the undermining of national sovereignty, and therefore citizen's rights, in favor of the economic interests of gigantic transnational corporations (TNCs). Consequently, Enloe (2002) vocalizes the feminist interest in globalization, as she asserts that "feminists need to pay attention to international issues not only because international politics affects our futures but also because patriarchy creates gendered divisions of labor" (p. 533).

Various disciplines have taken up the study of globalization from their vantage points. Postcolonial discourses, for example, concentrate on blurring the borders of colonizing discourses that govern the world and its people. Transnational discourses have evolved from recognizing globalization as the flow of people, trades, and economies across nations to investigating the volume, intensity, characteristics, focus, and direction of such exchanges (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996; Jameson and Miyoshi 1998). Frederic Jameson (1998) describes globalization as "an untotalizable reality" because on one hand it comes with the promise of crossing multiple national borders, but on the other hand, these border crossings produce binary relations between nations, their people, and cultures. For example, when women in India come to the U.S., they feel certain racial and national borders drawn around them, which they did not

experience while they were in India. Therefore, even though the migration of a transnational Indian woman to higher education in the U.S. might indicate a globalization of education, the borders drawn around her due to her race and nationality indicate a certain kind of ordering of the world and its people through/with/against which the woman would have to author herself.

Thus, how the term globalization is utilized is always vulnerable to interrogation because of the unrest caused by both merging and contesting borders. The feminist, postcolonial, and transnational feminist concerns over globalization is its production of imperialistic discourses creating binary relations that define various forms of racialized, exoticised, colonized people from various “Us versus Them” perspectives (Mohanty 1991; Visweswaran 1993; Bhabha 1994; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Basu 2001; Handa 2003). Mohanty (2004, p. 124) critiques the imperialistic aspect of globalization as she asserts that globalization is, “the primary economic and cultural practice to capture and hold hostage the material resources and economic and political choices of vast numbers of the world’s population.” In other words, if the promise of border crossings comes with unbalanced privileges, then established localized and globalized social systems of inequalities continue to favor people situated on one side of the binary-driven discourses while creating “scattered hegemonies” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994) for groups on the other side of the binary, namely women, colonized, non-Western, exotic, backwards, and traditional groups. Therefore, globalization defined by cultural exchanges does not always materialize into blurring cultural borders in ways that are beneficial for people on the wrong side of the binary.

Challenging these binary-driven discourses, multiple de/colonizing epistemologies resist production of imperialistic knowledge. De/colonizing epistemologies represent collective and varied ways of knowing the hegemonic effects of colonizing discourses and their foundational

assumptions. Colonizing discourses are those that emerged from the post-Enlightenment European discourses (Smith, 1999) and currently represent imperialistic discourses forcing polarized relations between people, their locations, their categories of identification, and their ways of knowing and understanding the world. These imperialistic discourses continue to create grand narratives that exoticize non-White narratives or push them to the periphery. Since de/colonizing epistemologies function in spaces invaded by colonizing and decolonizing discourses, de/colonizing epistemologies represent the interactions of these discourses in challenging imperialism. Accordingly, resistances can occur on a small or large scale, at the personal or political level. Political activist Arundhati Roy critiques Western³ Empire building:

If we look at this conflict as a straightforward eyeball to eyeball confrontation between Empire and those of us who are resisting it, it might seem that we are losing. But there is another way of looking at it. We, all of us gathered here, have, each in our own way, laid siege to Empire. We may not have stopped it in its tracks--yet--but we have stripped it down. We have made it drop its mask. We have forced it into the open. It now stands before us on the world's stage in all its brutish, iniquitous nakedness. (Roy 2003, p. 122)

Roy's criticism challenges Western Empire building by blurring the margin/center borders and privileging alternate conceptualization of resistance strategies. She criticizes, encourages and acknowledges small and large-scale resistances against Empire building. Such acknowledgement is aimed at creating alternate discourses that can generate different understandings of struggle,

³ My use of Western is not an untroubled monolithic one. Rather, I use this term to resonate with Spivak, Bhaba, and Roy to denote the kind of ordering of the world where certain groups of people and certain locations are systematically and consistently privileged with economic, military, and social control to create and monitor forces of globalization.

oppression, resistance, and liberation than what has been previously established by the rhetoric of the Empire. Imagining alternate possibilities, Roy concedes:

Our strategy should be not only to confront empire⁴ but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness--and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling--their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.

Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them.
(Roy 2003, p. 142)

Such arguments create the thrust for de/colonizing discourses where world orders are questioned, re-imagined, and nations are blurred onto each other to resist the oppressive effects of globalization on multiple groups of people including female transnationals, the focus of this study. Hence, this study is motivated by the globalized social and transcultural movements of

⁴ I present Roy's discussion of the Empire. "When we speak of confronting 'Empire,' we need to identify what "Empire" means. Does it mean the U.S. Government (and its European satellites), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and multinational corporations? Or is it something more than that? In many countries, Empire has sprouted other subsidiary heads, some dangerous byproducts nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism and, of course terrorism. All these march arm in arm with the project of corporate globalization. Corporate Globalization - or shall we call it by its name? - Imperialism - needs a press that pretends to be free. It needs courts that pretend to dispense justice. Meanwhile, the countries of the North harden their borders and stockpile weapons of mass destruction. After all they have to make sure that it is only money, goods, patents and services that are globalized. Not the free movement of people. Not a respect for human rights... So this - all this - is "empire." This loyal confederation, this obscene accumulation of power, this greatly increased distance between those who make the decisions and those who have to suffer them." Roy, A. (2003). War Talk. Cambridge, MA, Southend Press.

I read Empire as the network of globalized world structures that continue to maintain power relations in their favor and create world orders to reinforce imperialistic understanding of the world, its people, and knowledge that can be considered legitimate.

people, knowledge, skills, languages, ideologies, and technologies. These movements interwoven in complex ways in the lives of female Indian transnational participants reveal multiple types and effects of “worlding” (Spivak 1993)⁵ and the current world order. These movements reveal the types and effects of networks of local, national, and global socio-cultural-political institutions that maintain, disrupt, and reconfigure world orders through analysis of race, class, gender, nationalities, and other politics of location (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). What was otherwise considered “normal” or “common sense” could become visible and interrogated for embedded hegemonic assumptions.

The study is unique in some aspects because it contests the oft-held perspective that the migration from India to the U.S. (read Third World to First World) carries within it the explicit promise of better opportunities and quality of life. While it is true that the direction of the movement of the human capital is more from India to the U.S. than vice-versa, this unidirectionality is a site of analysis for several systems of inequalities. Globalization is not yet a cause for celebration for many people currently residing in liminal spaces because as Edward Said (1993, p. 282) states, “Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become ‘past’ in the face of globalization.” Consequently, imperialism continues to be manifested and maintained through globalization in the complex realities of female Indian transnationals who are thrust onto the wrong side of the binary-driven discourses.

Migration of a female Indian transnational⁶ from her exotic location (there) to the U.S. (here) situates her in a complex and inseparable web of spaces, discourses, and subject positions. Shuttling through multiple cultures, a female transnational has to accommodate to and negotiate

⁵ Spivak and other postcolonial scholars use worlding as a way to describe the Empire’s efforts to define the world in terms of First and Third World, developing nations, progressive and backwards, where the world is divided into categories according to the Empire’s perspectives.

⁶ I use the term “female Indian transnational” not as a fixed label of identity but as a site of analysis comprising varied negotiations of multiple subject positions.

multiple social structures while maintaining, dismissing, and reconstructing various relationships with the world around her. What are the implications for constructing selfhood amidst such complex negotiations and discursive influences? In this study, I attempt to trace the movement from “Third” to “First” world and analyze the effects of multiple local/global social structures on the lives of the participants.

Situating Scholars and Theoretical Frameworks

I anticipate that reading this dissertation will create a dialogical experience since this dissertation is informed by scholars working in multiple de/colonizing theoretical spaces. Although I do not specifically assert untroubled allegiance to any theoretical framework, for the purpose of this dissertation I have chosen works by scholars in transnational feminism and postcolonialism to best support this study. However, it is not my intent to claim an exhaustive knowledge of all the theoretical frameworks that comprise de/colonizing epistemologies. The works chosen directly represent my subjectivities where certain de/colonizing perspectives are privileged such as disruption of binaries, creation of alternate discursive spaces, and identification of sites of resistances. The reader will understand and interpret from her/his own subjectivities and theoretical home(s) which may or may not resonate with mine. Moreover, the scholars whose work supports this study cannot be tightly bound to one specific theoretical framework. Certainly the arguments presented by scholars cited in this dissertation could be used and extended in various other frameworks.

Since it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to identify all the potential ways other theoretical frameworks could interact with this study, I identify scholars who inform this research and discuss how their arguments construct knowledge in this study. Using writing as a form of inquiry (Richardson and St. Pierre Forthcoming), I examine and construct possibilities

out of the scholarly works and theoretical frameworks presented within. It is not my intent to claim that arguments presented are “original” because that would imply an exhaustive knowledge of existing arguments. Rather, by demonstrating the journey through which arguments are constructed, I invite the reader to join in the same journey. If in such journeys the reader makes her/his discoveries or disagreements, then this dissertation becomes dialogical and by all means, all arguments presented should and ought to be suspect.

Grounded in de/colonizing epistemologies, this dissertation at times harshly criticizes racialized or imperialized discourses. It is not my intent to offend by such dialogues but to bring visibility to issues of social oppression and oppressive practices at localized and globalized levels. It is not my intent to portray any group of people only as oppressors or victims, but as people who practice complex ways of accepting and resisting normative expectations placed on them. This dissertation discusses the disruption and merging of such binaries. Nevertheless, understanding oppression and its material effects in people’s lives involves examining the realities and discursive productions of such oppression, which is a painful process. I request the reader to join me in this journey as cultural barriers are fractured, multiple border crossings created, and dialogues initiated for issue-based resistances and solidarities.

Theoretical Frameworks

As mentioned earlier, this study is informed by decolonizing epistemologies and methodologies. Linda Smith, speaking from a Maori perspective, describes the colonizing nature of research:

The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. Just knowing that someone

measured our ‘faculties’ by filling our skulls of our ancestors with millet seed and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who we are. It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appalls us that the West can desire, extract, and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations. (Smith 1999, p. 1)

While Smith’s critique is situated within the context of research done “on” Maori people, postcolonial scholars like Mohanty (1991), Minh-ha (1989), Visweswaran (1993) criticize similar notions of establishing imperialistic knowledge about the “exotic Third world.” Keeping such critiques in mind, this research is designed to honor the voices of the participants as much as possible while acknowledging the multiple mitigating factors through which they would be unheard. It is with the spirit of de/colonizing research that ways of knowing are not marked with brief entry and exit points into the participants’ lives. Rather this research is considered to be a fluid process of developing relationships that exceed beyond the researcher’s academic gains. As a female Indian transnational graduate student, I occupied a researcher/researched position allowing me access and easy establishment of rapport. This rapport converted into cultural kinship relations and friendships that exceeded the purpose of this research. Such relationships implored me to honor the participants, provide them with access, dignity, and authority over the knowledge produced about their lives. Using de/colonizing epistemologies, gendered histories, and negotiations, the lived experiences of the participants are authored with as many departures as possible from colonizing discourses. The destination for these departures is not a

de/colonizing haven because all spaces are traversed with multiple colonizing and decolonizing discourses. Therefore, constructing knowledge from de/colonizing epistemologies will always already be rife with tensions and contradictions. In the following paragraphs I discuss how de/colonizing epistemologies inform the theoretical frameworks of the study.

One of the key issues of concern in feminism is that there remains a wide-ranging lack of consensus on the definition of feminism that could serve as a “point of unification” (hooks 2000). Without being able to define “women/woman” in a term with agreeable multiplicity, the feminist movement is in danger of being co-opted without unity. However, most feminist discourses arising from the U.S. and Europe situate multiplicity within feminism at the nexus of race, class, and gender. Consequently, Grewal and Kaplan (1994b) argue against the “trinity” of race, class, and gender to include multiplicities from non Euro-American perspectives:

It is important to examine the ways in which race, class, and gender are fast becoming the holy trinity that every feminist feels compelled to address even as this trinity delimits the range of discussion around women’s lives. U.S. feminists often have to be reminded that all peoples of the world are not solely constructed by the trinity of the race-sex-class; for that matter, other categories enter the issues of subject formation both within and outside the borders of the United States requiring more nuanced and complex theories of social relations. (p. 19)

One of the categories to which Grewal and Kaplan refer is the politics of location⁷, which can offer insights to identity, agency, resistance, and power relations. Sangari and Vaid (1993) emphasize that understanding women as agents requires understanding that the “notions of femaleness, self, or identity are so tied up with questions of family, class, religion, and other

⁷ Grewal and Kaplan refer to politics of location to indicate the material conditions affecting women’s lives emerging from the socio-political discourses situated in one’s home, community, state, and nation.

forms of collectivity that they cannot be framed in terms of a single unified axis” (p. 871).

Gedalo (1999) and Grewal and Kaplan (1994) argue for understanding the multiple relationships emerging from the politics of location that not only mark women by their race and ethnicity, but by other categories of reference such as caste, religion, family, community, nationality, and sexuality. By recognizing other categories of examination, especially in the current era of globalization, implications for border crossings become visible. How do women construct their self-hood when border crossings erase their previously held privileges like race, class, caste, religion, and social visibility? Clearly the category of woman/women cannot be fixed, defined, or unified under any trinity of analysis (race, class, gender), leading analysis to be based on contingent relationships between the multiple subject positions that women occupy.

Butler (1990) states that the category of women/woman is always suspect and advocates understanding woman as a socially constructed subject belonging to multiple categories of social identity. These multiple categories of social identity remain in flux as they carry multiple meanings in varied contexts. Hence, rejecting the notion of coherence to fix the category of woman renders the multiplicities of social categories of identities in a perpetual flux, constructing gender as a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred. How then should woman/women be situated in the postcolonial, transnational, context? The limits and possibilities of the term “postcolonial” provide some directions to answer the above question.

Postcolonialism, according to Loomba (1998/2002), is a word that needs to be “used with caution and qualifications.” Loomba compares it to patriarchy in feminist thought where it is “applicable only to the extent that it indicated male domination over women. But the ideology and practices of male domination are historically, geographically, and culturally variable” (p. 18). Defining postcolonialism is difficult for two reasons. First, to consider postcolonialism

temporally as that which happens after colonialism is to miss the current and evolving effects of colonialism on once colonized countries and their subjects. Second, defining postcolonialism as a socio-political condition that affects once-colonized countries is inadequate due to the divergent material conditions and consequences of colonialism. For example, Canadian postcolonialism has different material consequences for its residents than Indian or Kenyan postcolonialism.

Hence, the term 'postcolonial' can be used to "refer to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: "postcolonial" is (or should be) a descriptive not an evaluative term" (Hulme cited in Loomba, 1998/2002, p. 19). However, there is no 'pure' (Gedaloof, 1999) space that can disengage colonialism⁸ in its entirety. Accordingly, I situate postcolonialism as the political, economic, and socio-cultural practices which arise in response and in resistance to colonialism. The concept of postcolonialism is constantly evolving amidst the current global culture, so postcolonial "can serve as a term that positions cultural production in the fields of transnational economic relations and diasporic identity constructions" (Grewal and Kaplan 1994).

Conversations about diasporic experiences emerge out of the discourses in transnationalism. At the rudimentary level, transnationalism refers to the practices of migrants who live their lives across multiple nation-states if not at least in two nation-states. Riccio (2001, p. 583) states that "transnationalism is a term commonly used to contextualize and define such migrants' cultural, economic, political, and social experiences (p. 583). Transnationalism and transnational migrants are highly contested terms as borders between worlds permeate and

⁸ See Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments* where colonialism is discussed as a way of maintaining unequal international relations of economic and political power employing social, cultural, and religious means of control, as well as economic and political ones, using both institutional and repressive state apparatus. In colonialism, the ruling group represents the colonized as the "other" those that are inferior and radically different, and hence incorrigibly inferior.

technological advancements emerge. With the ease of travel and the birth of second and third generation children of migrants, the concept of the transnational, a sense of origin and home become problematic. Additionally, Grewal and Kaplan (1994) situate transnationalism in political opposition to hegemonic social structures, noting that the transnationalization of people promotes shifts “that challenge the older, conventional boundaries of national economies, identities, and cultures” (p. 9).

Grewal and Kaplan (1994b) further state that feminist interests are often absent from transnational discourses. They urge feminist political practices to acknowledge transnational cultural flows in order to “understand the material conditions that structure women’s lives in diverse locations. If feminist movements cannot understand the dynamics of these material conditions, then they will be unable to construct an effective opposition to current economic and cultural hegemonies that are taking new global forms” (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994b, p. 17). Thus, questions about the production of a female transnational migrant’s experiences of her diasporic location and home can highlight the contesting and complimentary relationships between the multiple social structures that continue to inform, challenge, and influence her.

In the following section, I justify the rationale for conducting this dissertation study within the substantive framework of female Indian graduate students’ experiences in higher education.

Substantively Speaking

Schools and universities are sites where life experiences are constantly constructed, and reconstructed in negotiation with multiple normative notions of what it means to be a “successful student.” The complexity of these negotiations is influenced by issues of gender, race, languages, nationality, class, and ethnicity. The juxtaposition of these issues offers several opportunities as

well as barriers to students. These opportunities and barriers are markedly different for international students, especially females of a minority background whose social positions are framed primarily by their race and gender amongst other subject positions.

For the past two or three years, Indian students have comprised the largest number of international students coming to the USA, despite the strict immigration regulations post-September 11, 2001 (Jha 2005). Four to five years ago, Chinese students were consistently higher than any group of international students. However, since the banning of GRE tests in China, Indian students have comprised the largest group of international students in all of the USA. Of the incoming Indian students, there are more females than males (Birbili, 2000).

Specifically, abundant research exists on “Asian” international students highlighting life experiences and academic performances. However, studies about Asian international students and their life experiences have largely been limited to Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese students leaving a silence about Indian students (Chan, Burtis, & Bereiter, 1997; Chang, 2000; Chen, 1996; Elkins, 1994) or students from other Asian (dark-skinned) countries. Studies about Asian international students mostly concentrate on language barriers as these students navigate through higher education. These issues include academic performance, locating resources, being in the correct programs, arranging for transportation, buying groceries, inability or unwillingness to use counseling services, and other everyday living opportunities. These studies highlight belongingness and adjustment as primary issues, and demonstrate that sometimes Asian students convert to Christianity in order to belong and gain a support-system from their Church communities (Chang, 2000; Chen, 1996; Elkins, 1994). What might be other points of negotiation if language barrier is not the primary site of analysis for international students?

Little research exists about the life experiences of Indian students, especially female Indian students. The increasingly large number of female Indian students studying in the USA remains an unstudied phenomenon despite the lack of women's presence in education in India. In India, the proportion of educated females, especially highly-educated (post-secondary) females is low compared to their male counterparts (Narang 2000; Kingdon and Unni 2001; Cameron 2002). Women's education is not highly encouraged amongst lower class families. The lack of encouragement put on the education of females is informed by gender norms that dictate women's role should be more domestic or labor-intensive both inside and outside the home, therefore demanding little or no education. For many Indians (rural and urban) education is expensive and they choose to invest more of their funds on a son instead of a daughter looking at issues of return of investment. Consequently, the number of women from lower class families in education decreases and becomes almost non-existent in the higher levels of education. Female students from middle and upper middle class families who are visible in higher education are not always expected to pursue long-term independent careers with their education. Rather, many are expected to use their educational qualifications amongst other attributes to attract suitable partners for marriage. Hence, when a woman gets married while pursuing higher education, she does not always complete her education. Cumulatively, the number of girls and young women enrolled in education gradually declines from primary to post secondary level of education leaving a gender gap where men are more visible than women in higher education (Kingdon 1997; Sundar 2000; Ramile 2001; Kingdon 2002; Ramanathan 2002; Chanana 2003).

Consequently, the large number of female Indian students who come to the U.S. to pursue their graduate work has evoked a strong research interest. What expectations do they

perceive inscribed on them? How do they behave differently based on the expectations placed on them? What expectations do they conform to and what expectations do they modify or reject?

Mostly, university international offices orient students to issues such as registration, fee submission, health care coverage, and income tax (Pederseon 1991; Zhang and Rentz 1996; Angelova and Riazantseva 1999; Wan 2001; Wang, Martin et al. 2002) and do not address the issues affecting the students' daily experiences. Such offices may not provide adequate resourceful support, but concentrate on administrative support. Moreover, professors and administrators are not always aware of ways to remain sensitive to the needs of their international graduate students (Levinson, Foley et al. 1996; Mutua and Swadener 2004). Sometimes professors unintentionally treat international students as cultural specimens or fail to present instruction from diverse perspectives (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). As a result, I am interested in exploring the life experiences of female Indian graduate students who have been in the U.S. for no more than 1.5 years to identify salient aspects of the production of their transnational experiences.

My interest in working with women is not only to increase visibility and understanding of female Indian graduate students' experiences when language is not a barrier, but also to extend the perception of Indian women in their complexities without rendering them as passive, oppressed subjects unaware of their own agency as seen in multiple works (Lugones and Spellman 1983; Binford 1988; Chakravarti 1990; Ghosh 1992; Chakravarty 1999; Lamb 2000; Chanana 2003; Handa 2003). I examine the extent to which a female transnational participant can claim agency in her personal thought and practice and over her historical role while negotiating her commitment both to her Indian culture and a foreign way of life that consequently reconstructs her subjectivities. Female Indian transnationals in the U.S. are in a

challenging dislocated position as they struggle to balance their lives amongst multiple contradictions and expectations. Expectations emerging out of hegemonic norms are mostly constructed by patriarchal and colonial epistemologies (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). Since transnationals negotiate their life experiences from the liminal spaces of contradiction, contestation, and sometimes confusion, investigating the moves they make to accommodate and disrupt expected norms is valuable in understanding their agency, conceptualization of oppression, and their subsequent acceptance or resistance. In other words, since female transnationals being in the space of in-between-ness are continuously informed by multiple contradictory and similar discourses, their actions and re-actions can become important in understanding their strategic negotiations without pushing them into victimized and liberated subject positions. Thus, this research can create alternate possibilities and understandings of agency, oppression, and resistance based on the complex juxtaposition of not only race, class, and gender but of the politics of location (caste, family, religion, history, community, nation) that inform the participants of this study.

Purpose and Research Questions

Based on the above discussions, the purpose of this research is two-fold, both substantive and methodological. Substantively, I want to examine how female Indian graduate students who have been in the USA for no more than 1.5 years negotiate their initial experiences while pursuing their education. Methodologically, I want to explore how research can be informed utilizing the decolonizing theoretical and methodological frameworks of postcolonialism, transnationalism, and feminism. The specific research questions that I ask are:

1. What relations and practices are enabled by the material and discursive conditions of transnationalism and how in turn do the two female Indian graduate students construct/maintain/dismiss subject positions within those relations and practices?
2. What expectations do the two female Indian graduate students retain from their Indian upbringing? What expectations do they discard or modify? How do female Indian graduate students conceptualize their modification of expectations?
3. How do the two female Indian graduate students conceptualize their academic experiences (e.g. classroom experiences, relationships with advisors, expectations for performance, understanding their role as graduate assistants, and interaction with other students, and people of diverse backgrounds, etc.)
4. As a transnational researcher studying other transnationals, how do I incorporate decolonizing methodologies in my research? What deliberate moves can I make to decolonize my work? What are the limits of the possibilities of decolonizing methodologies given my colonized education and upbringing?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed how globalization and the new world order continue to produce hegemonic binaries and misunderstandings. I use this study to interrogate the promise of globalization where blurring boundaries continue to propagate social systems of inequalities locally and globally. Theoretically, transnational feminism and postcolonialism provide a framework to study the movement of people and their shuttling between multiple physical, temporal, and imagined spaces produced by contestatory discourses. Several networks of social structures produced by colonialism, patriarchy and other oppressive practices become sites of analysis as they manifest material conditions in the lives of female Indian transnationals. Thus,

examining the complexities and multiplicities of the subject position of the transnational Indian woman/women will assist in reconceptualizing agency, resistance, and oppression and render the participants as more than passive, oppressed people. One implication of exploring the production of transnational Indian women's experiences in higher education is to create dialogues and possibilities in curriculum, instruction, and orientation events that respond at the individual and institutional level with greater sensitivity to the needs of international students. A second implication is to make visible the various social systems and practices of inequalities locally and globally so that multiple possibilities of dialogue and resistance can emerge.

In the next chapter, I specifically explore the literature on higher education, feminism, transnationalism, and postcolonialism to identify the ways they work with/against each other to inform this study.

CHAPTER 2: SRUTI, SMRITI, AND LIPI

The tradition of learning in India has been primarily through oral instruction from a guru to his *shishya*, or disciple. Guru indicates a teacher, someone who inspires, who is a guide both in the material and spiritual world. The *shishya* accepts the teachings unconditionally while he⁹ masters the teaching through a three step process. He first hears attentively and intensively, otherwise known as *sruti*, then he recalls the teaching from memory (*smriti*), then if inspired he writes (*lipi*) down the teachings and his construction of knowledge in texts. These texts emerging from the *parampara* (tradition) of guru-shishya interactions became the social, religious, and historical foundations of Indian discourses. The absolutism of these texts is rarely questioned. Rather these texts serve as divine guides referring back to an imaginary point of origin from where discourses about gendered and cultural expectations arise. These discourses usually discipline and fix women's behavior on multiple fronts and continue to reinforce the value of being "traditional" Indian as part of a female's national, religious, and spiritual pride (Mishra and Ghosh 1994). Through effective proliferations, such disciplinary discourses become canonical and the construction of knowledge remains unquestioned.

I use this introduction to explore the construction of knowledge through my *sruti*, *smriti*, and *lipi*, as a reminder to interrogate fixed understandings and to create a politics of possibilities so that literature is not merely used as foundational canons, but as points of dialogues, departures, and provocations.

Since this study is grounded in de/colonizing epistemologies, I begin with a discussion of de/colonizing epistemologies and how they are taken up differently by various disciplines. The chapter continues with specific theoretical and research literature incorporating feminism with a

⁹ I use the masculine gender here because traditionally women were not encouraged to leave their home and pursue an education, that too from another male. Thus the tradition of guru-disciple has been only accessible to males.

specific emphasis on high-level theories informed by transnational feminism. Transnationalism, a mid-level theory is the focus of subsequent discussion, followed by substantive literature review on higher education in the U.S. and in India. The chapter ends with a discussion about trajectories and the overlapping terrain of literature informing this study.

De/colonizing Epistemologies

De/colonizing epistemologies are taken up differently by various fields including feminism, anthropology, comparative literature, postcolonialism, etc. in order to challenge previously established ways of understanding, knowing, and making sense of the world. Since this study is at the intersection of transnational feminism and postcolonialism, the following discussion represents the epistemological arguments that inform the de/colonizing aspects of these frameworks.

Linda Smith (1999) describes the politics of academic knowledge where certain ways of understanding are privileged over others. She argues:

Academic knowledges are organized around the idea of disciplines and fields of knowledge. These are deeply implicated in each other and share genealogical foundations in various classical and Enlightenment philosophies. Most of the ‘traditional’ disciplines are grounded in cultural world views which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems. Underpinning all of what is taught in universities is the belief in the concept of science as the all-embracing method for gaining an understanding of the world. (Smith, 1999, p. 65)

In other words, Smith’s argument challenges current academic system of knowledges for being unresponsive to belief systems that are traditionally marginalized and silenced. Consequently, when knowledge is produced from those previously ignored cultural spaces, they are considered,

“less adequate, less “universal” and less “scientific” – in other words, inferior” (Harrison 1997, p. 6). Examining trends in anthropology, Harrison elaborates on the silencing of racialized perspectives, despite anthropology’s inclination towards studying cultural diversity and perspectives. Harrison argues (1997):

Paradoxically, despite the pervasiveness of racialized structures of inequality, neither mainstream nor radical/critical anthropology has contributed a wealth of insight and knowledges to our understanding of racism and the socio-cultural *construction* of racial differences...Anthropology’s preoccupation with redressing ethnocentrism does not exonerate it from neglecting to confront, both in intellectual and sociopolitical terms, racism/White supremacy as a major ideological and institutionalized force in today’s world. The connotations of a racialized Other – it’s most extreme and invidious form being *the Black Other* – have been and, unfortunately, still remain underpinnings of many anthropological assumptions and practices. (p. 6)

Harrison’s criticism represents the forced binary which promotes institutionalized and socialized systems of racial inequalities by situating groups of people on the wrong side of the binary of White versus non-White. Mohanty (1991) launches similar criticism and argues against the production of Third World woman as a singular, monolithic subject, thereby creating a colonized Other. She argues that such depiction of Third World woman implies a paternalistic posture of U.S. based feminism which tends to define and benchmark feminism on its own image. Consequently, the complex and sometimes overt and covert conditions and strategies of ‘Third World’ women are seen as backwards, or needing help and guidance from western feminist ideals.

These arguments call for rupturing binaries between the oppressor and the oppressed and situate 'Third World' women (or any other woman) in their particular historical, political contexts and breaking apart the practice of 'First World' women as subject and 'Third World' women as objects of analysis. Such departures open up spaces of differences amongst women of any background, which can open up previously unthought-of possibilities of alliance and resistance to challenge imperialistic norms.

What does it feel then to be a 'Third World' scholar situated in Western academia, yet rendered invisible by colonizing discourses? How do de/colonizing epistemologies function for people whose histories, cultures, and traditions have not been written or written from anglo-andro perspectives? Mutua and Swadener (2004) writes:

For most scholars of color and their allies we are the 'colonized,' feeling the consequences of the Eurocentric, scientifically driven epistemologies in which issues of power and voice are drowned by the powerful 'majority' players reflecting the master's ideology. For us, *there is no postcolonial*, as we love our daily realities in suffocating spaces forbidding our perspectives, our creativity, and our wisdom. (p. ix)

Mutua and Swadener's situatedness illustrates the complexities of being an academic and attempting to "voice" de/colonizing perspectives while strategically negotiating their own colonizing positions. Echoing the complexity of a de/colonizing scholar in western academia, Smith (1999) examines the role of the native researcher:

Currently, the role of 'native' intellectual has been reformulated not in relation to nationalist or liberatory discourses but in relation to the 'post-colonial' move across the boundaries of indigenous and metropolitan, institution and community, politics and scholarship. Their place in the academy is still highly problematic. Gayatri Spivak who

writes as a post-colonial Asian/Indian intellectual working in the United States argues that Third World intellectuals have to position themselves strategically as intellectuals within the academy, within the Third World or indigenous world and within the Western world in which many intellectuals actually work. (p. 71)

Smith and Spivak's argument about strategic positioning, along multiple groups of audiences further complicate how one can remain vigilant about the contradictions of being a "native" researcher. The term "native researcher" is contradictory because membership in the native community is troubled by being a researcher in a non-native community and the membership in western academia is met with many types of gate-keeping and negotiations through which production of knowledge is mitigated. Thus, interrogating who is listening, who is speaking, and what gets said and heard become critical points of analysis to construct de/colonizing epistemologies. Spivak elaborates:

For me, the question 'Who should speak' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?' 'I will speak for myself as a Third World person' is an important position for political mobilization today. But the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously, not with that kind of benevolent imperialism. (Spivak 1990, p. 59)

Spivak's concern in being heard questions the interactions between imperialistic discourses and de/colonizing epistemologies. How does one uninformed by de/colonized discourses understand Third World positions without abandoning her/his imperialistic subjectivities? Thus, the question of how one is listened to is critical in extending and proliferating de/colonizing epistemologies. Spivak's argument illustrate that listening, understanding, and interacting to Third World, or Other positions come with various colonizing expectations. One such expectation is to make

transparent Third World or Other subjectivities for the colonizers. In other words, the responsibility to educate the colonizers rests on the colonized. Audre Lorde challenges this responsibility from a feminist perspective:

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance, and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of the all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that is the task of the black and third world women to educate white women, in the face of tremendous resistance, as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought. (Lorde 1984, p. 100)

Lorde's argument identifies how expectations placed on women and women of color to educate men and colonizers respectively are inherently oppressive acts that contradict the goals and intentions of "understanding" the position of the "Other." Understanding the differences between people is not just the Other's responsibility but a shared responsibility which requires genuine effort, curiosity, care, concern, and ethics on everyone's part, and not just on the part of the 'Others' to bring their own writing in existence in transparent terms so that "everyone" can get what s/he is saying. De/colonizing epistemologies informing feminism, transnationalism, and postcolonialism continue to promote discourses that call for the colonizers to abandon such expectations which engage the colonized's energies to meet the master's¹⁰ needs.

Promoting alternate ways of knowing and understanding, many colonized people choose to write themselves into existence and in such writing discover their complicated positioning and

¹⁰ It is difficult to define what the term 'master' means. Instead I highlight what the term 'master' does in multiple contexts. Master can be any individual, groups, or social systems whose sciences, epistemologies, knowledges, and practices are normalized, idealized, and discursively proliferated to create hegemonic social relations amongst people.

colonization. Transnational feminism and postcolonialism continue to encourage an examination of the fluidity of the subject positions that people occupy when they write themselves into existence and author their own stories. For example, Mitsuye Yamada writes:

An Asian American woman thriving under the smug of illusion that I was *not* the stereotypic image of the Asian woman because I had a career teaching English in a community college. I did not think anything assertive was necessary to make my point...it was so much my expected role that it ultimately rendered me invisible...contrary to what I thought, I had actually been contributing to my own stereotyping...When the Asian American woman is lulled into believing that people perceive her being different from other Asian women (the submissive, subservient, ready-to-please, east-to-get-along-with Asian woman), she is kept comfortable with the state of things. (Yamada 2002, p. 36-37)

Yamada's narrative highlights how her need to depart from "Asian" stereotypes and identify herself as atypical only perpetuates the colonial understanding of the "Other." In other words, by stating herself as "atypical" Yamada maintains "Asian" stereotypes from which she attempts to depart. Moreover, with the assurance of being 'atypical' comes a false sense of comfort with the ways things are thereby co-opting Yamada to accommodate to her situation instead of identifying the ways she is being racialized and the ways she perpetuates such racialization.

By examining her invisibility engendered by her own internalization of Asian stereotypes, Yamada demonstrates that colonization of the mind can be a powerful way to fix a person into certain subject positions.

On the other hand, Minh-ha questions the implications of writing oneself to existence when s/he occupies a lumpy terrain of contestatory loyalties.

S/he who writes, writes. In uncertainty, in necessity. And does not ask whether s/he is given the permission to do so or not. Yet in the context of today's market-dependent societies, "to be a writer" can no longer mean purely to perform the act of writing. For a laywo/man to enter the priesthood – the sacred world of writers – s/he must fulfill a number of unwritten conditions. S/he must undergo a series of rituals, be baptized and ordained. S/he must *submit* her writings to the law laid down by the corporations of literary/literacy victims and be prepared to "*accept*" their verdict. (Minh-ha 1989, p. 8)

Minh-ha's remarks present the tension between one's need to write out of necessity, uncertainty and the disciplinary conditions that s/he has to fulfill in order to be accepted into the fraternity of writers who can author their and Other's existence. This is a complicated position for a "native researcher" because they have to work towards being "accepted" as they write their existence, and resist certain Western discourses causing a shuttling between being native and a Western academic. Therefore, even though a native researcher can author her existence, such mitigating factors continue to colonize her existence and authoring as evident in both Yamada and Minh-ha's arguments. De/colonizing epistemologies then become a tenuous ground from where scholars can accommodate and resist colonizing foundations and assumptions.

Stemming from such tenuous grounds, de/colonizing epistemologies question the divisive nature of imperialistic discourses that justify globalized social systems of inequalities.

Specifically, Haviland (1990, pp. 457-458) describes the current state of the world as a *global apartheid*, which he describes as:

a de facto structure... which combines socioeconomic and racial antagonisms in which (1) a minority of whites occupies the pole of affluence, while a majority composed of other races occupies the pole of poverty; (2) social integration of the two groups is made

extremely difficult by barriers of complexion, economic position, political boundaries, and other factors; (3) economic development of the two groups is interdependent; and (4) the affluent white minority possesses a disproportionately large share of the world society's political, economic, and military power.

Haviland's definition of *global apartheid* speaks to the systematic ways groups of people are racialized, classed, and exploited to maintain the status quo of an 'affluent minority white group.' The task of de/colonizing epistemologies then is to examine how the current world order colors, shapes, and classes people and what the effects are of such world order. Sometimes, these forms of classification are overt and can be easily identified for analysis. However, Minh-ha (1989) claims that such systems of social inequalities are maintained on implicit levels to maintain a certain world order. Describing the complexities of enforcing cultural diversity, Minh-ha argues that these efforts are counter-intuitive because:

They work toward your erasure while urging you to keep your way of life and ethnic values *within the borders of your homelands*. This is called the policy of "separate development" in apartheid language. Tactics have changed since the colonial times and indigenous cultures are no longer (overtly) destroyed (preserve the form and remove the content, or vice-versa). You may keep the traditional law and tribal customs among yourselves, as long as you and your own kind are careful not to step beyond the assigned limits. Nothing has been left to chance when one considers the efforts made by South African authorities to distort and use the tools of Western liberalism for the defense of their racialistic-ally indefensible cause. Since no interrogation is possible when terror has become the order of the day, I (not you) will give you freedom. (Minh-ha 1989, p. 80)

Minh-ha's conceptualization and expansion of "separate development" outside of South Africa denotes the effects of colonization guised in the mask of sensitivity and compromise while retaining unbalanced power relations and control over the colonized. In other words, there are borders drawn around the colonized and their activities inside the borders are carefully regulated and manipulated. By monitoring the colonized and their "tribalistic" ways inside the borders as defined by the colonizers, a false sense of liberation pervades masking the various ways the colonized are controlled and co-opted. Resistance and accommodation within these borders then continue to align with/against colonizing discourses, sometimes leaving little room for alternate ways of thinking since the colonized's energies are invested in breaking the master's house using the master's tools (based on Lorde's figuration). Such efforts of cultural "diversity" only perpetuate status quo and unbalance privileges between the colonizers and the colonized.

De/colonizing epistemologies constructed from such understanding of the world order, unbalanced power relations, social systems of inequalities, forced binaries, complexities of voices being heard, and the troubling position of being a native researcher in Western academia inform the theoretical frameworks cited in this study. In the following sections I discuss the overlapping theoretical and substantive literature that function in spaces traversed by both colonizing and decolonizing discourses.

Configuring Feminism and Transnational Feminism

Feminism is probably one of the most visible social movements of the late twentieth century. Although the early feminists who were mostly, White, middle class women (hooks 2000) worked hard for social and economic equality, they did not integrate issues of race and class into multiple social structures of oppression. However, with the growth of feminism,

contemporary feminist and transnational feminist scholars¹¹ like Leila Ahmed (1988; 1992), Linda Alcoff (2000), Jacqui Alexander, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991; Alexander and Mohanty 1997), Amrita Basu (1995), Avtar Brah (1996), Minnie Bruce Pratt (1988), and Judith Butler (1990; 1990), not only challenged the use gender as a category of analysis, but introduced the complexity of gender when intersected by race, class, location, religion, community, and nation. Since these subject positions are inter-related and influence and inform each other, contemporary transnational and other forms of feminism call for analysis across all the subject positions and their effects on the material conditions of women's lives.

Feminist scholarship is pursued by women in U.S. more than any other part of the world. Of late, theorizing feminism has become a currency for scholars to mobilize themselves in academia (Mohanty, 2004). Mohanty elaborates on this issue further.

The increasing predominantly class-based gap between a vital women's movement and feminist theorizing in U.S. academy has led in part to a kind of careerist academic feminism whereby the boundaries of the academy stand in for the entire world and feminism becomes a way to advance academic careers rather than a call for fundamental and collective social and economic transformation. (p. 6)

From transnational feminist perspectives academic pursuits in feminism, especially using the U.S. as a benchmark create more of a divide between the Metropolitan/First world and Colonial/Third world binary. Yet the world does not operate in separate First and Third world spaces, where modernity and traditions can be found discretely in either location. Rather, as Mohanty (2004) presents that the terms "First" and "Third" world are concepts produced from

¹¹ Not an exhaustive list of contemporary feminists. For works of other contemporary feminist theorists who continues to challenge feminist boundaries see Ruth Frankenberg (1997), Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan (1994), bell hooks (1992, 1994, 1999, 2000), Lisa Lowe (1994), Lata Mani (1990), Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), Kumkum Sangari (2002) and Ella Shohat (2001).

imperialist projects which requires further reworking where all forms of “worlding” (Spivak, 1993) are merged and juxtaposed with each other so that feminist projects are designed to understand the oppressive practices through multiple local, social, national, and global structures.

According to Stone-Mediatore (2003), transnational feminist theory “offers a particularly useful analytical framework to investigate the role of stories in struggles of resistance against exploitative and oppressive relations. In addition, transnational feminist theory allows us to identify experiencing subjects in terms of specific social, political, and cultural hierarchies without naturalizing identities” (p. 127). Stone-Mediatore argues that transnational feminism creates a space for stories that can reveal the multiple ways women’s experiences are produced and demonstrates how such experiences can be mapped onto localized, nationalized, and globalized systems of oppression. Grewal and Kaplan (1994, p. 13), use transnational feminism to “problematize a purely locational politics of global-local or center-periphery in favor of...lines cutting across them” (p. 13). Transnational feminism then focuses on issues of cultural exchange of people, trades, technology, knowledge, wealth through local and global spaces and the subsequent material conditions generated by such movements. Grewal and Kaplan (1994, p. 17) warn that transnational feminists need to organize themselves to analyze how “scattered hegemonies ... reveal themselves in gender relations” to avoid isolated feminist movements that are “prone to reproducing universalizing gestures of dominant Western cultures” (p. 17). Thus, transnational feminism advocate for coalition-based politics that privileges multiplicity without essentializing any categories of identity.

However, categories of identity are not that easy to delineate as reflected in Chaudhury’s (2000) transnational feminist study as she worked on/with Muslim women. Chaudhury presented

her insider/outsider research through fragmented narratives with embedded analysis, and realized that several colonizing discourses shaped her categories of identity and history. She discusses:

How far back in time and space should I go when talking about the hybridization of meaning systems and identities? How do I date the rupturing of my own ethnic identity? Could I just trace that rupturing to when my village-born father became the first person in his family to attend the school that was set up by the British government, or did it all begin more recently just before I was born when my father received the award for a Ph.D. in the United States? Or did my hybrid state come into being when my paternal great-grandfather, who was born a Sikh, converted to Islam because a voice in the fields told him to go to Makkah? Or was it more significant that my maternal Hindu great-grandfather chose to migrate to Punjab from Persia and became a Muslim to avoid going to trial after being accused of murder? What about my great-grand-mother and their stories? Why does no one talk about them? (Chaudhury 2000, p. 105)

Chaudhury looks at the ruptures that construct her self-hood and in that tracing discovers the silences about her mother's and grandmother's stories. Chaudhury's interrogative posture in tracing back her histories revealed the material conditions of the women, their untold stories, and her realization that her subject positions informed by her family are effects of patriarchal and colonial discourses. From this messy space, when Chaudhury attempts to author her transnational subjectivities, she finds that such subjectivities fall into multiple, messy, undefinable categories. The contrasting of silent feminine histories with pervasive patriarchal and colonized ones raises issues about religious, national, gendered, familial, local, communal, national, and international relations and practice in shaping fluid categories of transnational identities.

Capitalism

Another key area of concern within the current feminist movement is its conceptualization of equality using capitalistic models of financial gain. This financial model of equality is based on the perception that power is only accessible through financial gains. Although hooks (2000) and Mohanty (2004) have called for a reconceptualization of power, in the current transnational corporate, normalizing capitalist U.S.¹² culture, power is still situated across a binary between the powerful and the powerless. Being powerful is grounded in the “capitalist values of [financial] profit, competition, and accumulation” (Mohanty, 2004, p. 6). As a result, the White liberal feminist plight¹³ has been to seek financial equality between men and women. There is no denying the merits of equal pay for equal work, however, there are several problematic implications for focusing on just representing a financial equality without integrating the structures of oppression that produce such inequalities.

Since, much of the feminist literature is generated in the U.S., privileging a capitalistic feminism further normalizes U.S. definitions of feminism, projecting an ethnic elitism implying that other non-White U.S.-based or global cultures should strive for feminism akin to U.S. based practices.

Audre Lorde questioned such universalizing posture in an open letter to Mary Daly:

I feel that you do celebrate differences between White women as a creative force towards change, rather than a reason for misunderstanding and separation. But you fail to recognize that as women, those differences expose all women to various forms and

¹² This is not to imply that capitalism is only a part of U.S. Rather, the discussion is grounded on how U.S. based feminism is produced and practiced against the backdrop of a seemingly naturalized capitalist culture in the U.S.

¹³ Several feminist scholars like hooks, Anzaldua, Mohanty, and Alexander argue that a historical tracing of the liberal White feminist initiatives would yield patterns of activism that are based on masculinizing power and seeking equality through attaining that reified masculinized power. In a capitalist society like U.S. it has often meant concentrating on financial equality. Although a valuable and necessary plight, women have been co-opted on the grounds of seeking such equality while claiming their femininity as Joan Scott demonstrates in her article *Difference vs. Equality*.

degrees of patriarchal oppression, some of which we share, some of which we do not...The oppression of women knows no ethnic or racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries. To imply that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women, is to lose sight of patriarchy. (Lorde 1984, p. 137)

Lorde's argument highlights the complex ways patriarchy functions in women's lives creating differences across several axes of analysis including race. Certainly, patriarchy creates multiple oppressive effects on women's lives but these oppressive effects are further influenced by a woman's privileged positioning based on other subject positions such as race, class, gender, nationality, religion, caste, sexuality, etc. Hence Lorde's criticism calls for tools of analysis that incorporate the specificities of women's oppression to map the divergent and pervasive effects of patriarchy.

Note the reference to U.S. based liberal White feminism is by no means intended to imply that it is a monolith. It is not my intent to equate all White liberal feminist texts on their strengths and weaknesses. Acknowledging that White liberal feminist authors write with varying degrees of care and complexity, the goal of this discussion is to draw attention to the coherent patterns of knowledge constructed through the works of bourgeois feminists (hooks, 2000). These patterns conceptualized feminism against the backdrop of capitalism, power creating a binary between the oppressor and the oppressed, Whites and non-Whites (exotic Others) and rendered alternate feminist perspectives invisible by classifying them as backward, oppressed, and politically unaware (Mohanty 1991). U.S. based feminism still privileges White middle-class perspectives¹⁴ much more than any other perspective as evident from topics and attendances in

¹⁴ I am not implying the invisibility of the works of Black, Chicana, Asian, or other anti-class, anti-race based feminists. In fact, the criticisms of non-White feminists are about the privileged presence of class- and race-based

national conferences, curriculum and instruction in women's studies, and publications in mainstream journals¹⁵ (Dave, Dhingra et al. 2000; Bharadwaj 2001; Chandy 2002; Chatterjee 2002; Harris 2002; Picart 2002; Springer 2002; Tierra 2002). Hence, there needs to be more studies integrating the complexities of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, caste, community, and other relevant subject positions in understanding the production and negotiations of gendered experiences.

Power and Resistance

To develop strategic resistances, I look toward Foucault's and hooks' conceptualization of power relations and power that operate outside the oppressor/oppressed binary. My reading of Foucault's work on power does not render power in a negative way or see power as a unilateral force of oppression on the less powerful. Foucault (1977) says that power is not static, rather it is dynamic, and exists in relations through discursive productions. He elaborates,

We must cease at once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it "excludes," it "represses," it "censors," it "abstracts," it "masks," it "conceals." In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to the production.
(p. 190)

Foucault emphasizes on the production of power through discourses and people's identification with and internalization of multiple discourses. In this way, power circulates, produces, and

feminists as evident in multiple anthologies like *This Bridge Called My Back, This Bridge I Call Home*. Indeed there is a broad array of work that resists hegemonic discourses in feminism, however, such work is often ghettoized or Othered, so that they can be dismissed easily such as "South Asian Issues." It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss every form of non-hegemonic feminist discourse, however their contributions are tremendously invaluable and critical to create feminist discourses that can respond to multiple sensibilities.

¹⁵ The references cited here include various people's experiences of marginalization in academia in feminist and non-feminist spheres where they felt that their positions were rendered invisible, irrelevant, or too conflicting with the position of mainstream discourses. These events occurred within classrooms, meetings, conferences, and publications.

exists in relation. However, power works in complex ways, and Foucault (1978/1990) explains the need to discard binary paradigms when looking at power.

Power comes from below:[...] there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations and serving as a general matrix – no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. (p. 94)

Thus for power to proliferate, it needs to work through several networks of social structures to continually exist in multiple relations. Foucault (1977) cautions against seeing these multiple forms of power relations as “analogous or homologous” (p. 27) but rather the productive power is divergent, multidirectional, diffused force. Hence Foucault states, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1978/1990). Based on this understanding of power, resistance does not always have to radically change all relations of power. Rather people can regroup and reconstruct certain power relations that can be mobile and temporary based on desires. Accordingly, Foucault (1981/1988) explains that the possibilities of change are “very urgent, very difficult, and quite possible” (p. 155).

hooks’ notions about the discursive nature of power remain consistent with the relational and productive form of power described by Foucault. hooks (Foucault 1977; 2000) conducts a trace on power and argues that we¹⁶ internalize a masculine notion of power from a young age due to the productive nature of discourses about power.

¹⁶ My use of the term “we” is not to assume a voice for all, but to express hooks’ ideas as she has stated in her argument. hooks uses the term we to include both men and women who are influenced by normative discourses in power where power is seen as taking control over the other and establishing a high level of economic worth. hooks claims that as a society we have adopted and naturalized the capitalistic and masculine model of power without questioning the effects of such a value system. For further discussion, see *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center* (2nd ed.).

Like most men, most women are taught from childhood that dominating and controlling the other is *the* basic expression of power. Even though women do not yet kill in ways, do not shape government policy equally with men, they, along with male ruling groups and most men believe in the dominant ideology of the culture. Were they to rule, society would not be organized that differently from the way it is currently organized. They would organize it differently only when they have a different value system. (p. 87)

hooks' arguments advocate developing an alternate value system instead of trying to forward women's position using the current normative understanding of power and success informed by value systems that dictate domination of one group over the other. Extending this argument to globalized capitalism, Lorde's argument becomes useful again since new tools are needed to "dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984, p. 112). Lorde urges feminists to focus on that which makes them "different" or "Other" as strengths rather than weaknesses in order to develop ways of "beating" the master. She states:

It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support. (Lorde, 1984, p. 112)

Put it simply, Lorde is echoing hooks' calls for reconceptualizing how feminists look at strengths and weaknesses to empower themselves and develop anti-imperialist practices. hooks criticizes (hooks 1990; hooks 1992; hooks 2000; hooks 2003) the bourgeois White feminists for imitating men and using them as role models for strength and power. She (hooks 2000) criticizes

bourgeois White women for not considering poor and working-class women, their differences, strength as role models for power.

Poor and working-class women did not become the role models for bourgeois white women because they were not seen by them as exercising forms of power valued in this society. In other words, their exercise of strength was not synonymous with economic power. Their power is in no way linked to domination or control over others, and this is the form of power that many bourgeois women are intrigued and fascinated with. (p. 89)

hooks' criticism implies a masculinization¹⁷ of power where one has to control the other and amass economic wealth to be considered a role-model worthy of imitation. Women, who internalize and express themselves in similar masculine terms, serve as role models of power in feminism. hooks remains concerned that this concept of power is detrimental to feminism as it views women to be victims through a masculine gaze. Thus, hooks (2000) states that, "women, even the most oppressed among us, do exercise some power. These powers can be used to advance feminist struggle" (p. 92). hooks talks of multiple forms of resistance, even in silence, and draws from her own experience when growing up, attending college, and becoming a professional educator (hooks 1990; hooks 1992; hooks 2003). All of these experiences socialized hooks to identify with a dominant definition of power privileging either men or White women, which she resisted either through her writing or through silence, stating that her spirit remained unbroken. Consequently, hooks (2000) offers a suggestion for women:

Women need to know that they can reject the powerful's definition of their reality – that they can do so even if they are poor, exploited, or trapped in oppressive circumstances.

¹⁷ While I do not believe in any essentialized masculine or feminine definition, hooks' use of masculine is a reflection of how upper middle class White women used men as their role models for power and success, thereby masculinizing what it meant to be powerful and successful, promoting the value system of domination and oppression.

They need to know that the exercise of basic personal power is an act of resistance and strength. (p. 92)

Both hooks and Foucault advocate for the dynamic and fluid nature of power that can be produced through any set of localized or globalized social and economic networks. What this means for transnational feminism is a renewed perception that power does not have to be defined in masculine terms, that women exercise power everyday, and sexism or any other system of oppression does not render the oppressed powerless. Rather in recognizing, reconceptualizing, and in consciousness raising, power can be produced in different relations to challenge an oppressive system.

Theorizing Resistance

Resistance theories inform multiple liberatory discourses including critical theory, feminism, and postcolonialism. These theories challenge unequal social and power relations and open up spaces for possibilities that attempt to disrupt practices enforced by hegemonic social structures. I use this space to discuss selected works of resistance theorists that directly inform this study.

Resistance may be undertaken through both individual and collective actions. Giroux (1983) discussed resistance as more than an opposing behavior against a dominant group. He emphasized an understanding of the degree of resistance by incorporating the quality and consequences of the resistant behavior. While theorizing resistance, Giroux (1983) proposed that an individual's resistance must be understood within the context of the individual's history, subjectivity, needs, and ability to act, to struggle, and the ability to critique on a personal and political level. Such forms of resistance can lead to consciousness-raising as individuals come to

understand their social position, and this awareness may spark the motivation to become agents of change.

Resistance theorists in education envision transformative actions through critical pedagogy and radical democratization of learning environments (Giroux 1983; McLaren 1995). Such democratization of learning environments calls for understanding the social, political, and cultural contexts of education affecting people's lives in relation to education. According to Giroux (2003):

More than ever the crisis of schooling represents, at large, the crisis of democracy itself, and any attempt to understand the attack on public schooling and higher education cannot be separated from the wider assault on all forms of public life not driven by the logic of the market. Moreover, any politically relevant notion of resistance cannot be reduced to what goes on in schools but must be understood – while having different registers – in terms of wider configurations of economic, political, and social forces that exacerbate tensions between those who value such institutions as public and those who advocate neo-liberalism who see market culture as a master design for all human affairs. (p. 7)

Giroux's conceptualization of resistance in schools reflects acts informed by social, economic, and political discourses, implying that acts of resistance must always be interpreted in relation to the ways people understand these discourses. Thus, acts of resistance demonstrate more than individual agency. They demonstrate the intertwined effects of socio-political-economic discourses. Consequently, Giroux (2003) proposed:

Any theory of politics and resistance must be concerned with the conditions, the agents, and the current levels of struggle that lead to transformation. This means that any viable theory of radical pedagogy must not only be concerned with issues of curriculum and

classroom practices, but must also emphasize the institutional constraints and larger social formations that bear down on forms of resistance waged by educators, teachers, students, and others attempting to challenge dominant teaching practices as well as systematic forms of oppression such as tracking. (p. 8)

Giroux's suggestions for theorizing resistance call for developing an integrated understanding of resistance incorporating actors, conditions of resistance, and levels of struggle. Hence, in education, individual acts of resistance should be seen as negotiations of institutional and larger social discourses in order to challenge dominant restrictive practices.

Negotiations about social discourses involve ideologies with which people identify or which they reject. These strategic alignments also have implications for people marginalized according to race, class, and nationalities in the global marketplace. To understand how theories of resistance might function, the role of power structures in various ideological spaces needs to be explored. Giroux (2003) explained how theories of resistance function:

At best, theories of resistance are useful as highly nuanced theoretical tools for understanding and intervening within structures of power as they define diverse contexts across a range of institutional and ideological formations. In addition, theories of resistance involve more than simply registering models of oppression, they also point to the possibility of intervening productively in those educational contexts where reality is being continually transformed and power enacted in the interests of developing new democratic identities, relations, institutional forms, and modes of struggle. Theories of resistance become useful when they provide concrete ways in which to articulate knowledge to practical effects, mediated by the imperatives of social justice, and uphold

forms of education capable of expanding the meaning of critical citizenship and the relations of democratic public life. (p. 9)

In other words, understanding how power shapes institutions and ideologies informs the construction of resistance theories. Because the functioning of power is not static, the development of resistance theories is also fluid. Theories of resistance, then, respond to various ideological functions of power in order to organize individual and collective acts of struggle that incorporate both individual agency and institutional interests. Giroux's fluid conceptualization of oppression, power, resistance, and transformation based on changing relationships between actors, contexts, and normalized discourses creates possibilities for differences and similarities between people and their acts. These differences and similarities demonstrate the various ways oppression and resistance function materially in people's lives in educational and in other circles.

However, there are some instances in which resistant acts can reproduce/reinforce the very social structures that they attempt to destabilize. MacLeod (1995) discusses the simultaneous development of resistance and accommodation as a result of the "complex ways in which people mediate and respond to the interface between their own lived experiences and structures of domination and constraint" (p.19). Some ethnographic studies have demonstrated that transformative efforts by resistant working class cultures sometimes reproduce the very class roles and structures they intended to challenge (Willis 1977; MacLeod 1995). Therefore, theories of resistance need to be understood not only in terms of the individual and collective transformation they can produce, but also in terms of their potential for co-optation by precisely those dominant discourses/structures they oppose.

Feminist interests also intersect with the goals of resistance theorists like Giroux, as they incorporate critical education for women (Weiler 1988). Feminists' interest in resistance

highlights the dialogical aspect of resistance privileging a situated reading of agentic actions in multiple contradictory spaces. Covarrubias & Tijerina Revilla (2003, p. 463) discuss the partial, dialectical, and contested nature of resistance and the consequent implications for human agency:

Models of resistance posit that domination is never as mechanistic as Social and Cultural Reproduction [sic] models would have us assume, and instead is highly contested in the dialectic between ideological and structural constraints and human agency.

Therefore, models of resistance represent the interactions between human agency and the ideologies through/with/against which that agency was constructed. This dialectical relationship is a conflicting relationship, constantly shifting and informed by multiple discourses.

Feminists, like critical theorists, call for discovering alternate ways of understanding power, power relations, liberation, oppression, and resistance. Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) encouraged women to understand the various degrees of resistance in order to identify the agentic diversity of women as they strategically accommodate and resist various social systems. Supporting Abu-Lughod's argument, Stone-Mediatory (2002, 2003) and hooks (2000) theorize feminist resistance beyond the domination model that privileges control over another group. Instead, these feminists argue that even when resistance efforts do not produce tangible transformative effects, they are still significant in their legitimization of women's agency, personal power, spirit, and self-worth. Therefore, resistance is theorized beyond the effects of unbalanced power relations, viewed as the ability of individuals and groups to identify and mobilize power relations in their favor even in acts that do not yield tangible results. These little-known acts of struggle need to be honored and voiced in order to alter masculinized understandings of power, domination, and control. Scholars from various marginalized groups

have advocated for recognizing and writing these differences into existence as significant acts of resistance.

However, while writing differences, some feminist scholars from marginalized groups often used ideas of contingent foundations to defer causes of oppression and acts of resistances. Terms like “hybridity” and “multiplicity” privileged an understanding of differences, while exploring the un/patterned causes of oppression that produce the multiplicities and differences and hegemonic ordering of people remained permanently deferred. Accordingly, Rey Chow (2002) criticized feminist resistances by scholars of marginal groups, who privilege “differencing, without sufficiently re-flecting on its flip side, its circumvention of exclusion” (p. 184) leading to absorption into the dominant structure. In other words, there are certain reasons why a woman might be raced or classed differently from a dominantly represented group. In order to understand and organize acts of resistance, the conditions that cause women/people to be categorized and subjugated need to be exposed and challenged. According to Chow (2002):

An awareness of historical asymmetries of power, aggression, social antagonism, inequality of representation, and their like cannot simply be accomplished through an adherence to the nebulous concept of resistance and opposition. That concept itself is often constituted with the logic of differentiation—of disruption and departure—within a theoretical framework whose success lies precisely in its perennial capacity for including and absorbing that which is on the outside. Resistance that imagines itself as purely premised on the outside is thus a futile exercise in the wake of poststructuralist theory. In its stead, it would be more productive to let referentiality interrupt, to reopen the poststructuralist closure on this issue, to acknowledge the inevitability of reference even in the most avant-garde of theoretical undertakings, and to demand a thorough

reassessment of an originary act of repudiation/exclusion in terms that can begin to address the scandal of domination and exploitation of one part of mankind by another. (p. 185)

Chow's reminder to feminists is useful because she calls for exposing the "scandal of domination and exploitation" that leads to the creation of differences and unjust ordering of people in the world. Therefore, while differences between people can be permanently deferred, Chow questioned the value of such a deferral, and urged feminists who work from the margin to look at the original acts of denial/dismissal that resulted in differently categorizing people in marginalized groups. Chow called for reconceptualizing resistance, especially from a poststructuralist framework, as more than a position of being on the "outside." Since the boundaries between outside and inside can be blurred, resistance within a structure could be a "futile exercise." Thus, it is not enough to discuss issues of resistance in terms of the differences between people. Instead, a focus on the exploitative conditions and discourses that lead to such differences could be more effective in challenging structures of oppression.

In conclusion, this study is informed by theories of resistance that identify resistance in both individual and collective acts. These acts are socially, culturally, historically, and politically specific. Even if these acts are little-known acts of personal struggle, they can be utilized in broader arenas than those in which they were originally performed. However, acts of resistance run the risk of being co-opted and absorbed into the dominant social structure, or being unresponsive to the leading causes that exploit certain people in their everyday lives. Hence, acts of resistance need to be understood and interrogated on both individual and collective levels. Moreover, to organize acts of resistance, more emphasis needs to be put on how people are

produced in various raced, classed, gendered, and colonized subject positions in order to directly destabilize the discourses that inform unequal ordering of people.

Configuring Feminist and Transnational Feminist Issues: Discussion Summary

Although feminism has become more sophisticated in its theoretical developments, transnational feminism calls for re-working contemporary U.S. based feminist discourses to put into practice the notions of multiplicity, historicity, and de-essentialization of women from non-U.S. cultural backgrounds. Transnational issues facing contemporary feminists from both a local and global perspective include multidirectional cultural flows and oppressive practices affecting the material conditions of women's lives. Using hooks' and Foucault's arguments on power relations, I argue that feminists and transnational feminists who work towards a continued reconceptualization of power empower women not to come together as victims of oppression but as those who can find strength in personal and collective actions and resistances. In the next section, I discuss my readings of postcolonialism, transnationalism, and higher education and how they inform this study.

Postcolonialism

There used to be a muddy river, called Big Muddy around our house in Illinois. It was mostly muddy with some life forms. These brown and turgid waters ran through Illinois in mysterious ways. I say mysterious because sometimes you would see the Big Muddy River and then at other times it would be invisible. And just when you would not expect it, there would be the Big Muddy running right beside or underneath you while driving on the highways of Illinois. You could row in Big Muddy as long as you were willing to paddle or even get out of the water and push your rowboat through the mud.

Reading postcolonialism and transnationalism reminds me of navigating through the Big Muddy River. These theories are muddy and one can easily become mired in them. They are problematic in their structures and definitions. And like the mud in the Big Muddy, they do not hold on to their structures and shapes for long. At times I just have to jump in the messy muddy river of postcolonialism and transnationalism to look at the resistances, critiques that stunt my movement. In those moments I realize that instead of making the theories my foundation, my work around the messy mud becomes the foundation for establishing the legitimacy of those theories. Yet at other times I feel as though I am gliding through this muddy river somewhat problematically navigated by the muddiness of the river.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, postcolonialism is difficult to define and conceptualize without integrating several forms of criticism about the temporal, spatial, and political nature of the postcolonial discourses. Spivak (1999) offers a rather complex critique of postcolonialism that causes one to question how they read postcolonialism and what that reading does for one i.e. what spaces can one occupy? What protection do the spaces offer and provide? (Butler 1992)

Postcolonial studies, unwittingly commemorating a lost object, can become an alibi unless it is placed within a general frame. Colonial discourse studies, when they concentrate only on the representation of the colonized or the matter of the colonies, can sometimes serve the production of current neocolonial knowledge by placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past, and/or by suggesting a continuous line from the past to our present. This situation complicates the fact that postcolonial/colonial discourse studies is becoming a substantial subdisciplinary ghetto. In spite of the potential for co-optation, however, there can be no doubt that the apparently crystalline

disciplinary mainstream runs muddy if these studies do not provide a persistent dredging operation. (Chakravorty-Spivak 1999, p. 1)

I read Spivak's critique as one where she is troubled about the functioning of postcolonialism. On the one hand, postcolonialism tries to offer voices to those who were once colonized. On the other hand, this move situates colonialism as an event of the past and the current discourses are just ways to connect to the past. Yet, currently there are many prevailing and pervasive forms of colonization in once colonized nations and in the lives of their people. Spivak calls for a dredging operation. According to Spivak, the meaning of colonial and postcolonial is complex and interwoven with multiplicity juxtaposed with temporal, political, and cultural colonial discourses. Consequently, instead of defining colonialism or postcolonialism, in this discussion, I am going to "dredge" what colonialism and postcolonialism produce in specific contexts.

Being Colonized: The Process and Impact of Colonization

The pervasive nature of colonization extending beyond the conquering of physical space and economies can be found in de Alva's argument:

In most places, the original inhabitants, who logically grouped themselves into separate cultural units (i.e. ethnicities), all but disappeared after contact, wiped out physically by disease and abuse, and later, genetically and socially by miscegenation, and lastly, culturally, by the religious and political practices of the Europeans and their mixed progeny. (de Alva 1995, p. 243)

Alva's account of colonization marks several forms of colonization that function to normalize the ways of the colonizer. The success of the colonizers are more effective when they can make the colonized ape their value systems, normalizing disciplinary and oppressive acts towards each other. Such was (and still is) the colonizing effect in India where the rich elites learned English,

and dined with the *goras* (Whites) if they would learn to dispose of their “savage” ways and adopt English values. Soon English became the language of power, English values became progressive, and the English system of education became a site of privilege for those who could afford, and earn such privilege. Anything else was either irrelevant or unacceptable (Liddle and Joshi 1987). The reason why we cannot dismiss the colonizer’s values as lost trends in the past is because many of the cultural, social, and political discourses in India continue to function under English values, legal principles, and societal norms. English-speaking people in India are granted more privileges than speakers of any other native-languages in terms of opportunities in employment, lavish dowries in marriages, access to progressive and better funded schools, and employment in highest political offices (Channa 1988; Farah 1988; Yadava and Chadney 1994; Kingdon 1997; Kingdon and Unni 2001; Ramile 2001; Kingdon 2002; Ramanathan 2002; Bhattacharya 2003; Clarke 2003). Thus the Indians were not only colonized in terms of geography and space, but were colonized in terms of language and culture. The strength in British colonization was evident when Indians allowed not only the conquering of their spaces but also the conquering of their minds when they desired to be (and become) more like their colonizers (Devi 1993; Smith 1999/2002; Mohanty 2004). Rabindranath Tagore, a provocative de/colonialist thinker and a noble-prize winning poet urged the colonized Indian people to reconceptualize the multiple ways they were conquered to develop resistance strategies that defied the fascination with the colonizers.

I am sure you know that this soulless progeny of greed has already opened its elastic jaws wide over the fair limbs of your country, wider perhaps than in any other part of the world. I earnestly hope that you will develop some means to rescue her from her destination towards the hollow of its interior. But the danger is not so much from the

enemy who attacks, but from the defender who may betray. It fills my heart with a great feeling of dismay when, among your present generation of young men, I see signs of their succumbing to the depravity of fascination for an evil power which allures with its enormity. They go about seeking for civilization amongst the wilderness of sky-scrappers, in the shrieking headlines of news-journals, and the shouting vociferation of demagogues. They leave their own great prophets who had a far-seeing vision of truth, and roam in the dusk begging for the loan of light from some glow-worm which can only hold its niggardly lantern for the purpose of crawling towards its nearest dust. (Tagore 1924, pars 19-20).

Although Tagore situated the effects of colonialism in a stark good and evil binary, his call for decolonization emerged from the disappointment of witnessing how the Indian youth began imitating their colonizers and measured their self and national worth in colonized terms. Therefore, Tagore called for a rejuvenation of the indigenous ways of knowing and valorizing their cultural, social, and spiritual values that can provide not only a retention of heritage but also strength for resisting the colonizers. Tagore's words were timeless as they currently apply to the condition of Indian people whose daily lives are governed by the norms of colonialism, where the colonizer becomes the referent of the aspirations of the colonized. In the next section I discuss the material conditions of people's lives and implications for the marginalized in post-colonized¹⁸ India.

¹⁸ I use the hyphenated term post-colonized, or post-colonial to indicate a period of time. However when I use the term postcolonial without the hyphen it represents the theoretical critique that troubles both the linearity and spatial identification of the term post-colonial as discussed in Chapter 1.

(Post) Colonization in India

Self-colonizing has been a prevalent normalizing force in India. Through this force, marginal groups are disciplined and disenfranchised. Civil and citizenry rights, although provided for all, went unnoticed for many in post-independent India. Thus, the postcolonial status of India remains uncontested on several levels. Since India is diverse in its class structures and ethnicities, Mahasweta Devi, a predominant Bengali author describes in her moving novel, '*Shishu*' (Children), the literal and figurative crippling of the people in the lower classes and castes -- the tribal people in India. The limits of national development ignoring the needs of the tribal people are similar to the colonizing treatments of the British on the Indians. Moreover, denying an indigenous preservation post-independence is similar to British behavior during their invasion and occupation. Those that gain privilege in such post-independence India are those that can adopt the colonized views as their own. Thus, Mr. Singh, a character in *Shishu*, though well-intentioned, displays his colonizing attitudes towards a group of tribal people who were forced to live in the forests due to their rebellious demands for their lands and rights, and their need to practice living according to their cultural perspectives. Mr. Singh encounters these tribal people in the forest and thinks that they are mysterious, superstitious, uncivilized, and backward – those people that were once thought to be the indigenous pride of the country. At the chilling climax of the tale, we are brought face-to-face with these 'children' who thrust their starved bodies towards Mr. Singh, forcing him to recognize that they are not children at all, but adult citizens, stunted by free India.

Fear – stark, unreasoning, naked fear – gripped him. Why this silent creeping forward?

Why did not they utter one word? Why were they naked? And why such long hair?

Children, he had always heard of children, but how come that one had white hair? Why did the women – no no girls – have dangling withered breasts? ...‘We are not children. We are Agarias of the Village of Kuva... There are only fourteen of us left. Our bodies have shrunk without food. Our men are impotent, our women barren. That’s why we steal the relief [the food Singh brings from the Government to distribute to the more docile among the tribals]. Don’t you see we need food to grow to a human size again?

They cackled with savage and revengeful glee. Cackling, they ran around him. They rubbed their organs against him and told him they were adult citizens of India...

Singh’s shadow covered their bodies. And the shadow brought the realization home to him. They hated his height of five feet and nine inches. They hated the normal growth of his body. His normalcy was a crime that they could not forgive. (Devi 1993, p. 248-250)

This story highlights the colonizing nature of anti-colonial movements. Anti-colonial arguments are not separated from their colonial foregrounding. Divorcing years of colonial epistemologies and developing anti or postcolonial reconceptualization are problematic and do not represent the needs of the colonized effectively. In this story, Mr. Singh, a post-colonial subject, perceives the indigenous people of India as backwards, uncivilized, and invisible – a perception similar to how the British constructed the colonized Indian people.

Consequently, in this study I examine the fissures in anti-colonial movements and their effects on female subjectivities, agency, and oppression. I explore how the female Indian subject ceases to be the subject of the nation when the discourses of family, community, and religion come together. Although she has the right to work, vote, and claim property, the fissure remains

in her ability to exercise those national choices. The participants in this study have negotiated through/with/against these fissures in multiple strategic and not-so-strategic ways. By plotting these strategies, the shifting nature of subjectivities, power relations, agency, and resistance could become visible against the contour of post-colonizing discourses. Loomba's (1998/2002) statement further reinforces this study:

The newly appointed nation-state makes available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly: the dismantling of colonial rule did not automatically bring changes for the better status of women, the working class, or the peasantry in most countries. Colonialism is not just something that happens from outside a country or a people, not just something that operates with the collusion of forces from inside, but a version of it can be duplicated from within. So that 'postcolonialism', far from being a term that can be indiscriminately applied, appears to be riddled with contradictions and qualifications. (p. 12)

Loomba not only interrogates the contradictions in postcolonialism (read: critique colonialism and its effects), but highlights how patriarchy and colonialism often perform the same function of subjugation of women and the marginalized. Loomba's argument of duplicating colonialism from within blurs the boundaries between the margin and center. Transnational feminist interest in the postcolonial dialogues is critical to emphasize some of the ways independence and liberation continued to favor certain groups of people over others resulting in many unearned and invisible (McIntosh 1989) privileges.

Disrupting the Canon of Postcolonialism

Although postcolonialism does not purport to set up its own grand narrative against colonialism, it is not free from the riddled nature of its own fragmented epistemologies.

Postcolonialism shares similar deconstructivist, de-essentializing assumptions with postmodern and poststructural theories¹⁹ Spivak, one of the most vocal and frequently cited canonical scholar, states that the voice of the subaltern²⁰ cannot be heard and is often romanticized and interpreted in colonizing ways (Spivak 1993). Spivak presents a complex critique of the subaltern scholars claiming that “human individuals are not ‘sovereign subjects’ with autonomous agency over their consciousness” (Mcleod 2000, p. 191).” Spivak states that the representation of subaltern female has the implicit assumption that the subaltern female is in control of her consciousness and that the intellectual is a transparent medium through which the subaltern medium can be made present. Mcleod (2000) suggests that,

Representations of subaltern insurgency must not be trusted as reliable expressions of a sovereign subaltern consciousness; like “Third World women,” “sub-altern consciousness” is fiction, an effect of Western discourse. To retrieve the unruly voice of a “subaltern subject” from the colonial archives is to risk complicity in an essentialist, specifically Western model of centered subjectivity in which ‘concrete experience’ is (mistakenly) preserved (p. 192).

Both Spivak and Mcleod speak of crisis in capturing the voice of the subaltern because that voice is mitigated through various gazes such as theory, methodology, audience, and academic membership. So by the time, the subaltern is re-presented, her voice has been filtered and fictionalized through multiple discourses and methodologies. However, attending to the crisis of voice is not without its pitfalls because there are many women who suffer everyday in their lives

¹⁹ For a thorough discussion of postmodern and poststructural theories, see the works of the following theorists Scott (1991), Garrick (1999), and St. Pierre (2000).

²⁰ Although the literal meaning of subaltern is someone of a lower rank, Spivak uses this term to describe the disenfranchised in the Third World.

despite the inadequacy of theoretical and methodological tools to describe and understand those sufferings.

Given the stark differences in the class and social status of women (Gupta, Shah et al. 1982; Oak 1988; Pandey 1991; Reddy 1991; Ghosh 1992; Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994; Agarwal 1995; Sharma and Sharma 1995; Lamb 2000) in India, the more the subaltern is seen as a theoretical fiction, the more the suffering and exploitation of the subaltern female become a fiction too. I do not deny the arguments about the crisis of voice and representation in qualitative research. These arguments can be useful for deconstructive analysis of researcher posturing, but the material conditions of women's lives need to be addressed in ways where theory functions not only in the form of critique and deconstruction but also in the form of possibilities. So, given that every theoretical position would have its own limits and possibilities, how can social change be initiated? How can and should a researcher negotiate between perceiving and representing suffering while realizing the pitfalls and promises of his/her own subjective selection of information? Without attempting to deal with these questions, the material condition of women affected by oppressive social structures would continue to remain unaddressed.

Moreover, postcolonial critique at times creates a binary between colonialism and decolonizing epistemologies. But not all forms of colonial influences on India are bad and oppressive. Certainly, many such "colonial" influences forced India to look at its own oppressive practices against people of lower caste, widow burning, female selective abortions, and unequal educational rights for women. Although, women's rights were never on the top of the British colonial agenda, their support assisted multiple social rights activists to increase awareness of social injustice and to seek legal rights and protection. Therefore, while it is not possible to

situate postcolonialism in a completely decolonized space, it is unethical to demonize the effects of colonialism in its entirety. Instead, colonialism and postcolonialism exist simultaneously in the current global capitalistic culture with their own histories, limits, and possibilities. In this study, plotting the histories and trajectories against the backdrop of global capitalism, cultural flows, and transnationalism allows an understanding of the contradictions in de/colonizing epistemologies.

Postcolonialism: Discussion Summary

Although the theoretical framework of postcolonialism offers an imagined future of de/colonized epistemologies, understandings of the past and current effects of colonization reveal that postcolonial theories in some instances are complicit in their own colonizing practices. How can one divorce her/himself entirely from the colonizing discourses and ways of constructing knowledge (mostly from Euro-American scholarship) without looking at how colonialism produces her/his experiences and informs the framework especially in a global capitalist market place? I argue that the success of colonization is evident when the colonized people naturalize their subjugation, find it desirable to utilize the same methods as their rulers to colonize, and discipline their own people. Therefore, those who were disenfranchised by the colonizers often remain disenfranchised by the post-colonizers of free nations (like India). I highlight the dialogues emerging out of the postcolonial critique about the crisis of voice and representation that fictionalize the suffering of the subaltern. I argue that given the limits and possibilities of the postcolonial theoretical framework, representing voice would always be problematic, but that should not halt research and activism or fictionalize the suffering many women face daily.

I now discuss transnationalism, a predominant global force of migration (spatial, temporal, temporary, and permanent) that not only promotes global capitalism but also raises questions about opportunities and obstacles faced by transnationals through/against which they negotiate their lives.

Transnationalism

Recent discourses in transnationalism and diasporic phenomena have changed the face of immigration studies by highlighting the multiple connections transnationals maintain with their home and host nations. Earlier concepts in immigration studies assumed that “migrants basically broke their ties with their countries of origin and that the processes of acculturation and assimilation of migrants to their new society were what mattered most” (Itzigsohn 2001, p. 281). However, scholars like Nancy Foner have disrupted earlier assumptions about the assimilation of transnationals.

In a transnational perspective, contemporary immigrants are seen as maintaining familial, economic, political, and cultural ties across international borders, in effect making the home and host societies a single arena of social action. (Foner 1997, p. 355)

Foner opens up a new arena of inquiry where borders are blurred and several nations become the site of negotiation for transnationals. The rupturing of borders is even more prevalent with the technological advances that bring the world closer with a click of a mouse on a computer, or a pressing of a combination of buttons on a cell phone. Traveling to other parts of the world can now be done with more ease than before and even without relocating, one can experience another culture through the Internet and television. Considering that this arena of inquiry is relatively new compared to the previously held assumptions of immigration studies,

the construction of knowledge around transnationalism remains under-theorized. In other words, theories of transnationalism are minimal and more studies are required to create dialogues around a predominant trend of movement of people, resources, capital, and education across nations.

Consequently, Kim Butler calls for a new line of theory and methodology for transnational inquiry. She states, “We are witnessing and participating in the rise of a new line of intellectual inquiry, which necessitates the articulation of theory and methodology” (p. 190). On the other hand, Sarah Lamb (2002), conducting research on aging in postcolonial Indian contexts, claims that transnational studies so far have been mostly on macro level. Lamb emphasizes that more micro level theoretical and methodological understandings are critical to understanding the lives of transnationals in an intimate manner for the purposes of mapping the findings against the contours of macro level issues.

Transnationalism involves not only the macro, depersonalized flows of global capital, mass media images, and proliferating technologies but also the “intimate,” lived, everyday lives of particular people. I take “intimacy” here to refer broadly to the social relationships, lived experiences, and embodied practices that make up everyday human lives. (Lamb 2002, p. 300)

Such macro-level²¹ and theoretical works have been important and inspiring in opening up valuable areas of inquiry in anthropology and related disciplines. What has been largely left out, however, is close ethnographic research on how such transnational cultural worlds are constructed and experienced by actual people. This has meant little

²¹ Lamb uses the term macro and micro level to discuss broad and specifically focused theoretical and methodological works.

serious, careful consideration given to the kinds of issues that have long been crucial to anthropology: thick ethnographic fieldwork, human practices, and the ways in which broader forces play out in and via the lives of particular people. (Lamb, 2002, p. 301)

Lamb's call for micro level theoretical and methodological inquiry emerges from the silence in understanding how the cultural flows across the borders affect people's lives and construct their experiences. However, in exploring how people's lives are affected, feminist interests remain a largely under-explored area in transnational studies as mentioned by Grewal and Kaplan (1994) stated in Chapter 1. Recall Grewal and Kaplan situate transnationalism in direct political opposition to hegemonic social structures and urge feminist movements to understand the dynamics of the material conditions of women's lives because of transnational flows in order to develop effective resistances. Therefore, by asking questions about the production of experiences of female transnationals, effects of multiple cultural expectations and norms could become visible.

Conceptualizing Diaspora

The concept of diaspora seems to be a foundational concept in the discourses of transnationalism. Nevertheless, informed by multiple feminist discourses, I argue that the concept of diaspora is not only fluid, but the subject positions created by a fluid diaspora remain contingent and undetermined. For the purpose of this study, I focus my discussion of diaspora as it relates to the diasporic populations in the United States.

Kim Butler (2001) describes the word diaspora as "the dispersal of a people from its original homeland" (p. 189). However, since the 1980s, massive migration of people from

multiple cultures across multiple borders has increased, and concepts of origin and home have become problematic, especially in the U.S.

The U.S. has the largest foreign-born population in the world, 19.6 million, but the foreign-born are only 8% of the total population. Asian Americans are rapidly rising proportion of the US population (they will make up 8% of it by 2020), and Asian Indians are the third largest Asian group (after Chinese and Filipinos). (Leonard 2000, p. 22)

Such demographic information assumes a homogenous heritage along with clearly defined boundaries of the originary homeland and hostland. However, these assumptions do not work well for those whose parents migrated two or three generations ago, or married inter-racially (as seen in most Asian cultures) and are removed from a “home” land for multiple generations such as people in the African, Irish, and Jewish diaspora. Diaspora, then, becomes a fluid concept where notions of origin and home need to be interrogated on multiple grounds including religion (Jewish diaspora), nation (Indian diaspora), culture (Sikh diaspora), region (Caribbean), and continent (African diaspora). Moreover, issues of inter-generational negotiation need to be integrated and questioned to further the dialogues in diasporic discourses to avoid reification of diasporic subjectivities.

To understand the nature of the diasporic experience, Kim Butler (2001) proposes five dimensions of research.

1. Reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal
2. Relationship with the homeland
3. Relationship with the hostland(s)
4. Interrelationships within communities of diaspora

5. Comparative studies of different diasporas (p. 195)

Butler justifies her choice of these dimensions to “direct attention to issues unique to diasporas. Such an approach seeks to identify categories of analysis relevant to all diasporas, regardless of size or type” (p. 195). Butler’s typification provides a helpful starting point; however, the concepts of homeland and hostland continue to evolve for people in diasporic population based on their duration of stay in either of those spaces. Depending on time spent, home and hostland can merge into one without any specific distinction. Moreover, diaspora is a contested term understood differently from multiple discourses. Thus, Butler’s five dimensions may not always be relevant to “all diasporas regardless of size or type.” Furthermore, issues such as caste, class, national and ethnic identities continue to inform diasporic experiences which can probably fit into Butler’s categories but exceed those categories into new constructs of diasporic experiences. This study is situated at both inside and outside Butler’s categories to illustrate the fluidity of diasporic experiences.

Disrupting Transnational Studies

Along with the methodological crises of voice, language and representation, James Clifford argues that the current mobilization and theorization of diaspora puts the nation-state itself in crisis “as personal allegiances are increasingly defined in terms of “tribalistic” ethnicities (1994, p. 307). Moreover, with emerging technologies exposure to multiple cultures, forms of indigenous or “tribalistic” ethnicity seems to be marginalized leaving a nation state that appears to be in flux. In India, as a backlash against the loss of a “true indigenous” nation state, religious and political groups are emerging to reinforce “traditional” discourses in education, religion, politics, and social sciences. Preserving traditional reconstruction means upholding certain

gendered, class, and caste-based hierarchies that mute the interests of people who have been historically disenfranchised. Therefore, without ever leaving India, people can occupy various transnational subject positions that can further perpetuate established systems of oppression.

The pioneering work of Lisa Lowe (1991; 1994; 1996; 1997) on Asian transnationals demonstrates the multiplicity and multidirectionality of transnational understanding while exploring intergenerational conflicts, filial relations, and other cultural practices. Basu (2001) proposes a contingent foundational plan for framing subjectivities and subject positions in order to understand the multiplicity of transnationalism.

If we move toward a more material understanding of culture, distinguish between subjectivity and subject positions, and insist on the contingency of subject positions, we are more likely to be able to think of a politics of contingent coalitions and potential alliance. (Basu 2001, p. 221)

Basu's call for a politics of contingent coalition emerging out of the fluidity of cultural exchange and transnational experience refuses to produce fixed subject positions. Rather, the subject positions that people occupy are contingent on experiences, negotiations, and the influence of normative discourses, which cannot always be fixed beforehand. Contingent subject positions, once identified, can be explored to understand the formation and the limits and possibilities they offer to people. For example, instead of situating women as oppressed in India and more liberated in U.S., these subject positions can be deferred to the contingencies that construct them. Thus, an Indian transnational woman in U.S. might find her freedom in some ways but might feel restricted in terms of her race, religion, culture, and opt to minimize cross-cultural

understanding while maintaining strong allegiance with India and criticizing the lifestyles of the people of the U.S.

Hence Basu's call for politics of contingent coalitions can be understood in terms of interrogating assumptions, decolonizing previously formed subject positions, and exploring emergent subjectivities of transnationals from subject positions that might be permanently in flux. This politics of contingent coalitions create the research space needed to examine the ways in which people position themselves in histories, cultures, and languages of multiple nations.

Transnationalism: Discussion Summary

Through the discussion about transnationalism, I argued that discourses of transnationalism remain under-theorized due to its relatively recent development. This development in transnational scholarship creates the need to reconceptualize how diaspora and diasporic experiences are produced and understood by problematizing the notions of home, origin, borders, and heritage. Transnational scholarship has mostly been focused on macro level understanding of cultural flows while leaving a need for more micro level ethnographic work of people's everyday experiences. Transnational scholarship demonstrates the crisis of the nation-state (home) itself by thrusting the nation-state into a tribalistic subject position. The nation state is in crisis because of the indistinguishable nature of a 'pure' indigenous state, thereby, situating a need for a return to a nostalgic oppressive "simulated" point of origin.

While transnationalism opens up a space for multiplicity and fluidity of understanding, further interrogation of the colonial assumptions shaping the construction of experiences and knowledge needs to be widely explored. Finally, I present Basu's argument about a politics of contingent coalition that defers construction of subject positions based on multiple and varied factors.

In the next section I turn to the literature on higher education in India and the role it plays to inform my research of exploring negotiations of female Indian graduate students in USA during their first 1.5 years.

Higher Education and International Students in the U.S.

The research on international students in higher education in the U.S. demonstrates how students adjust and assimilate to the dominant U.S. culture. Moreover, this section particularly focuses on the studies conducted with/on Asian students that emphasizes mostly on South East Asian students and explores the silences in research with/on South Asian students in higher education.

Discourse of Adjustment and Assimilation

“Adjustment is a dynamic and interactive process that takes place between the person and the environment and is directed towards an achievement of fit between the two” (Anderson quoted in Ramsay, Barker et al. 1999, p. 129). The discourses in higher education about international students are abundant with discussions of assimilation and adjustment. A major portion of higher education research on international students explores their competence, development, adjustment, assimilation, and acculturation (Baker and Siryk 1984; Hiekinheimo and Shute 1986; Kagan and Cohen 1990; Ying and Liese 1990; Feng 1991; Anderson 1994; Zhang and Rentz 1996; Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998; Ramsay, Barker et al. 1999; Birbili 2000; Mulligan and Kirkpatrick 2000; Heggins and Jackson 2003). These discourses often assume adjustment only in terms of successful assimilation into the American mainstream culture (read: White middle class). Considering assimilation as a melting pot brewing a homogenous American cultural soup ignores the transnational cultural flows that are shaping the world. Tanaka (2002)

criticizes the literature in higher education as being too ethnocentric and dated. He asks, “Why have research methods on college student development not kept pace with the proliferation of social theory since 1970s addressing the connection between culture, power, and knowledge?” (Tanaka, 2002, p. 263). Hence, in this discussion of higher education, I highlight the knowledge constructed about international and Asian students in higher education and discuss the limits and possibilities of such construction. Then I discuss issues of higher education for women in India and implications for these women in higher education in the U.S.

The dialogues around assimilation and adjustment hold mainstream U.S. culture to be a fixed referent that international students should integrate themselves within in order to be considered fully adjusted to their learning and living environments. The expectation is on the international student to assimilate to a monolithic, imaginary U.S. culture in order to become a successful and happily adjusted international student. The directional assimilation erases the cultures of the international student and therefore perpetuates a colonized perspective of a ‘successful’ international student.

Previous research has emphasized that assimilation of American culture is a significant factor influencing the adjustment of international students (Alexander et. al, 1976; Tayash, 1988). Gordon (1994) contended that an immigrant is assimilated as soon as he has shown that he can “get on in the country”; that is the immigrant has adapted the lifestyle and cultural conditions of the host country. This includes the development of a basic proficiency in the language of the host country as well as a basic level of knowledge of native customs and values. Assimilation of *American* culture would facilitate the competency of an international student in meeting academic demands and personal life needs. (Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998, p. 702)

The politics of assimilation and adjustment is problematic because it normalizes and privileges being *American*²² as the only way to achieve emotional and personal stasis. Yet it does not consider the emotional and personal costs that international students have to pay to “adjust and assimilate” while they navigate through/with/against multiple cultures comprised of conflicting and imposing expectations. Moreover, the politics of assimilation and adjustment collapse the diversity of the international students into a stable U.S. culture without taking into account that the U.S. has the largest number of foreign born people on its soil of any country (Beykont and Daiute 2002). Thus, to assume that these large groups of people would have personal and professional success in U.S. if they integrate themselves to the mainstream American culture dismisses people’s native cultures and the conflicts they experience by being in multiple cultural spaces (physical, remembered, and imagined).

Additionally, many ethnic communities in U.S. find a balance in their ever evolving diasporic existences by building social networks within their ethnic groups (Jewish, African-American, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Latina/Latinos, etc.). In so doing people in various diasporas negotiate their lives from being simultaneously a part of and apart from their native and host cultures. Hence perpetuating the notion of development and success of international students on proper assimilation with mainstream U.S. culture reduces the negotiations of international students into a sameness.

International and Asian Students

Apart from the ethnocentric nature of the discourse of assimilation of international students, the literature about international students is reductive. Often international students are

²² My use of the term American is a reference from the preceding quote and not an implication of subsuming the continent of America into U.S. culture.

not classified according to their ethnicities but described as a homogenous group (Conner 1985; Wan, Chapman et al. 1992; Hayes and Lin 1994; Al-Sharideh and Goe 1998; Selvadurai 1998; Ladd and Ruby 1999; Smith, Chin et al. 1999; Chen and Barnett 2000; Pinheiro 2001). Not surprisingly, international students from Canada would face different issues than international students from China or Russia. When issues faced by international students are described, the reader does not get the sense of how their cultures are informing their experiences and negotiations. Some might argue that there is a growing body of literature about Asian students in higher education. While it remains true that there is a visible body of literature on Asian students, these works mostly target certain countries in South East Asia (China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea) while leaving a silence about other students from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka).

Studies about Asian international students concentrate on issues emerging from language barriers as these South East Asian students navigated through higher education. These issues include academic performance, locating resources, situating themselves in the correct programs, arranging for transportation, grocery, inability, and unwillingness to use counseling services, and other everyday living opportunities (Chen, 1996, April; Chen & Barnett, 2000; Conner, 1985; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kagan & Cohen, 1990). Nevertheless, these studies do not take into consideration the experiences of other students from Asia who might face different issues of negotiation when language barrier is not the primary concern. Using language barrier as a primary concern for international students further exoticizes them while glossing over the consequences of being racialized and classed in the U.S. Thus, investing production of experiences from a site where language barriers cannot be used as a primary factor producing

experience (i.e. Indian students), the saliency of various systems of oppression can become noticeable.

Invisibility of South Asians in Higher Education

There is a pervasive invisibility of South Asian issues in higher education. This invisibility comes from how knowledge about Asians remains limited to countries in South East Asia. A group of South Asian authors (Dave, Dhingra et al. 2000) discuss the gaps in the conceptualization of Asian in the United States. In their discussion of the questionable relationship between South Asians and Asian American Studies (AAS), they state, “South Asian American communities as well as scholarship on South Asian American issues have, at best, had a tenuous relationship with AAS” (Dave, Dhingra et al. 2000, p. 68). These authors further claim that despite a sizeable population of South Asians in the U.S. (the third largest population among Asians); they remain invisible when U.S. citizens consider a person Asian.

Such invisibility can be seen in other areas of intercultural scholarship, including feminism. Mandatory multicultural courses (in feminism or other areas of cultural studies) that provide a space for understanding Asian cultural perspectives often limit themselves to South East Asian countries. Asian feminism still maintains a silence or a token representation about South Asians. Thus, South Asian discourses are ghettoized into their own margins.

Dave et al. (2000) claims that the absence of South Asians in Asian American studies courses promotes an unproblematic homogenous understanding of Asian issues while leaving large gaps that fail to construct knowledge about South Asians.

No formal survey exists of South Asian American student responses to Asian American studies courses. However, the overwhelming evidence gathered from informal

conversations with South Asian American students on campuses across the nation, is that most courses on Asian America barely touch on South Asian American issues. When courses do include such issues, the instructor's perfunctory and hurried treatment of the material gives the unmistakable impression that no serious thought has been given to the South Asian Americans and the pan-ethnic formation of Asian America. (Dave, Dhingra et al. 2000, p. 84)

Therefore, in addition to the collapsing of international students into an un-interrogated homogenous category, South Asian students are dealt with a visible silence in academia including classrooms, conferences, and publications.

Moreover, when some South Asian instructors attempt to introduce their courses from a diverse Asian perspective, they receive multiple forms of resistance from students, administrators, and supervisors (Chatterjee 2002). Chatterjee writes a poignant narrative in her paper depicting the resistance from students in her class when she tried to situate herself and her introductory anthropology course from a pan-ethnic perspective of Asian scholarship.

I introduced my approach to anthropology by presenting my background as an Indian woman who had spent an early childhood in Nigeria and teenage years in northern India before coming to the United States. Therefore, my approach to anthropology was mediated by an education afforded by a tricontinental diaspora and its post/colonial histories. Thus the course material would explore the histories of imperialism, colonialism, and power as it examined cultural and social practices both within and outside the United States... Before I left the lecture hall, I saw a small piece of paper folded on the lectern. In neat block letters it said: "Dear Professor: There are ten of us in this class who hate you. We are not interested in anything you say. You are racist and you

should realize that. Change the way you teach or you will have no one left in your class.

We are telling you this for your own good as a teacher.” The note was unsigned.

(Chatterjee 2002, p. 80)

Such lack of interest in learning about issues from “South Asian” perspectives or perspectives of any group considered to be an “Other” was seen in various classrooms (Minh-ha 1989; hooks 2000; Mutua and Swadener 2004)²³. The resistances often reflect the discomfort in the critical posturing of the instructor, especially if she is a woman of color. The combination of resistances, misconceptualization of pan-ethnic Asian cultures, and lack of research in higher education reflecting issues from South Asian perspectives have marginalized South Asian scholarship and created an alarming invisibility. This study is situated at this critical gap of invisibility of South Asian students in higher education. By conducting this study, negotiations of South Asians are made visible and legitimized without using language barrier as the salient “cause and effect” for the transnational existence of international students in the U.S.

Higher Education in India

For women to participate in higher education in India, they would have to be in middle or upper middle class in India. Women’s participation in higher education is still lower than that of their male counterparts’ leaving a gender gap in education. In this section I describe the gender gap in education, followed by expected gender roles and subjectivities, agency, and resistance.

Gender Gap in Education

As mentioned in chapter 1, there is a consistent gender gap (Velkoff 1998; Kingdon and Unni 2001; Kingdon 2002; Chanana 2003; Chandra 2003; Siddhanta and Nandy 2003) in all

²³ The authors cited here claim in their personal narratives about how their de/colonizing ideas were met with resistance in the classroom either from fellow students or instructors.

levels of education in India, which remains predominantly large in higher education. The gender gap indicates that more males than females are enrolled in academic institutes at all levels of education. Consequently, over one million women in lower classes and in rural India remain uneducated (Singh 1979; Sundar 2000; Singh 2001). Many non-governmental international and national initiatives have been set up to increase the enrollment of girls in primary and elementary education in both urban and rural India (Velkoff 1998; Kothari, Vijaya et al. 2000; Chandra 2003; Clarke 2003).

However, when these policies are not implemented in realistic ways that would be responsive to the cultural norms and subjectivities, the participation of girls in education do not increase. For example, building a school in a rural area for girls is not enough to ensure that girls and women will attend. There are contextual and historical cultural factors that prevent girls from traveling back and forth to their schools, as they might be vulnerable to sexual assault, unsupported by family and community. People might ask questions like, “What would a farmer’s daughter do with education?” A family has to weigh its options of educating a daughter against cultural and social expectations, her marriagability, and availability. If sending a daughter to school would question her chastity, then a family might decide against sending a daughter to school especially if the end goal for the daughter excludes participation in any form of labor force employment that requires education. Thus, many girls continue to drop out of schools at all levels leading to a considerably lower female to male ratio of students in higher education than in any other levels of education (Kingdon 1997; Narang 2000; Ramile 2001; Ramanathan 2002).

Expected Gender Roles and Education

With a minimally visible number of female educators and administrators in higher education, a consistent message is conveyed to women about possible career options with higher

education – part-time secondary income or homemaker. Chanana (2003) explains this invisibility further:

In one of the departments studied, most men faculty joined as associate professors, while women joined at a lower rank as assistant professors. ...Women's careers thus tend to start at the lowest end, move up slowly, sometimes result in promotions against the odds, but ultimately culminate with retirement on very low salaries. (p. 385)

Thus, gendered career paths are not only formally and institutionally structured, but they are also patriarchal revealing the culture of colleges in India and the unbalanced power relations affecting women's participation. Moreover, for many female students, higher education is a commodity, a marketable quality to attract a suitable marriage partner. Established expectations on both male and female students dictate that they should be tracked primarily into science-based disciplines from a young age. It is a commonly held Indian belief that people who work and study in arts-based disciplines are not intelligent or capable enough to be successful in the sciences.

Employment, long-term career options, and decision-making powers are all embedded in science-based careers. Women remain under-represented in science-based careers in India and a large number of women graduate with arts-based degrees (Bhargava 1956; Blumberg and Dwaraki 1980; Bhandari 1983; Agarwal 1995; Cameron 2002; Blackwell 2004). Career opportunities are limited for students in arts-based disciplines; therefore there is an increasing amount of pressure for students to not only remain in the science-based disciplines but also to perform well to compete for the limited employment opportunities. The pressure of performance is so high that many students suffer from depression and contemplate suicide if they perform poorly, according to a survey conducted (Khan 1998). However, there is a silence about the production of women's

experiences in higher education despite the lack of visibility amongst the students and the educators.

Expecting male students to be the driving force of the intellectual labor market, classrooms in higher education in India are structured to privilege male students. Male students get more time to ask questions to their professors. They are offered more and frequent access to technology than their female counterparts. Female students, on the other hand, attempt to learn from their male peers and sometimes engage in flirtatious relationships with their male professors (Indiradevi 1987; Farah 1988; Gupta 2000). In conjunction with the argument that upper middle class Indian women often do not anticipate long-term careers emerging out of their education (Chanana 2003), it is then of no surprise that some women's negotiation strategies are not only based on effectively learning the material taught in class. Rather, they also concentrate on claiming their educational accomplishments to attract suitable grooms.

Apart from navigating for a smooth and successful completion of their programs, some women in urban colleges learn to remain passive in the classrooms (Mehta 1982; Majumdar 1994; Jeffery and Basu 1996; Kamble 2002; Kingdon 2002). Classes are mostly lecture driven, authoritative, and without many student-centered activities. Students are expected to talk only when spoken to and female students are not expected to speak much or take up much space. Consequences for women who are louder in space and speech than they are expected are high as these women attract rumors for being too effusive, flirtatious, and of weak character and resolve. Women are expected to behave in a traditional role of an ideal feminine image. Virdi (2003) speaks about women being the site of control as part of the national and social agenda of India:

Women, or rather the symbolic field of gender, are deployed by the anticolonial impulse, positing the "east" as the binary opposite of the "west" – critical to imagining a new

nation. Women are set up as repositories of an “Indian” tradition to establish difference, even superiority, over the west’s material influence. A deflated Indian cultural ego inscribes this ideal woman’s image – a blend of Victorian-Brahmin qualities – as its own insignia. (p. 207)

In other words, women are controlled through both colonial (Victorian) and anticolonial (Brahmin – highest Hindu caste) discourses, as both of them support patriarchy in multiple ways. These discourses are further proliferated in the culture of higher education leading “women” to be disciplined and controlled by measuring their femininity against an imaginary nostalgic notion of “ideal Indian woman” dating back to untraceable religious and historical discourses without any originary points.

Discursive Productions

How does the dominant Indian culture respond to the multiple trajectories of female subjectivities that practice resistance? While women try to author themselves by “orchestrating the multiplicity of their voices” (Holland, Jr. et al. 2001), the cultural, political, and religious leaders continue to proliferate oppressive discourses that discipline women and create a homogenous perception of a woman with “traditional” social membership roles. To facilitate this perception, television, movies, songs, and magazines continue the perpetuation of a sexually desirable image of a young college-going woman without any depiction of her academic goals. She is motivated by fashion and a desire to find her husband to be a homemaker. It is important to note that being a stay-at-home wife is not a negative role for a woman; however, to promote that role as the dominant and sometimes only role that women needs to fulfill is exploitive, damaging in that it silences women’s desires. Additionally, not all college-going women are motivated similarly and expect to pursue a career independent of their marital status. These

women remain minimally represented in popular cultural discourses. Moreover, to organize against resistant female subjectivities, educational ministers are now trying to bring back “indigenous” disciplines into higher education as “heritage education” that was silenced during colonization (Sundar 2000; Sarangapani 2003). Yet indigenizing the curriculum only refers to the power of certain male members of socio-political groups “who can transmute their beliefs into political knowledge” (Sundar, 2000, p. 381) even while it reinforces oppressive religious, social, and patriarchal ideals within the culture of higher education.

Scholars in many fields state that schools and colleges are sites of cultural production of identities and agency (Levinson, Foley et al. 1996; Holland, Jr. et al. 2001). Furthermore, “schools perform the complex work of validating and distributing the symbolic capital which enabled dominant groups to maintain their economic advantage” (Levinson, Foley et al. 1996, p. 5). Extending this argument further, schools can be a site of cultural production enabling dominant groups to maintain power relations in their favor. Through participation in formal and informal learning environments, both men and women are constantly being informed and re-informed of their social status. However, men are privileged with flexible and fleeting normative roles and women are usually the sites of control and fixation. While women’s education and participation in the labor market might lead one to rejoice in the progress of Indian feminism, upon closer inspection it would be clear that these roles are not empowering and do not meet women’s needs. They are educated to maintain the status quo of the upper middle class families of their potential grooms.

Yet it would be an error to construct Indian women homogenously and without any agency. Indian women, like any other group of women, possess a diverse group of subjectivities that cannot be fixed to any natural or essentializing depictions. Informed by multiple

contradictory and consistent discourses Indian women have varied forms of agency and author themselves in multiple ways. They sometimes resist vocally while at other times through silence. While a woman may represent herself as a passive, docile, female, she can participate in covert gender politics where she asexualizes herself to maintain her agency. When an Indian woman is informed by the traditional discourses, she has the agency to dismiss those discourses and form counter discourses. Thus, depending on how a woman situates herself agentically, she forms multiple relationships with dominant discourses through/with/against her emerging and contingent subjectivities. Therefore, in this space of authoring, female students operate within a “broad venue, where social languages meet, generically and accentually, semantically and indexically, freighted with the valences of power, position, and privilege” (Holland, Jr. et al. 2001).

I have presented the problematic nature of research in higher education that either collapses international students in one group or exoticizes “Asian” students while maintaining a silence about students from South Asia. I presented arguments claiming that research in higher education has been ethnocentric with hegemonic production of knowledge that supports a politics of assimilation as a criterion for development and success of international students in U.S. Finally I presented the context of higher education for women in India to situate my research interest and promote an understanding of these women’s negotiations of their experiences in US.

In the following section, as a chapter summary, I trace the trajectories I have taken in my discussions of feminism, transnational feminism, postcolonialism, transnationalism, and higher education and demonstrate how they work with/against/through each other to inform my research.

Tracing Trajectories: Feminism, Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Higher Education

Trying to connect the multiple dots between feminism, transnational feminism, postcolonialism, transnationalism, and higher education is arduous and messy. Although power exists in relations, I cannot fictionalize the fact that there are multiple examples of gendered power relations that affect the conditions of Indian women both in India and in U.S. These gendered forms of power relations are pervasive and well sustained by colonial, post-colonial, and imperialistic discourses. An interdisciplinary study of feminism, transnationalism, and postcolonialism can become a space for creating dialogues and strategies that can respond to the changing conditions of the world and women's lives.

As Indian graduate students move from one culture to another for higher education several forms of inequalities emerge in their lives that were previously absent such as race, class, religion, etc. However, discussing these inequalities only within the ghettoized discipline of South Asian studies creates more division between the U.S. and Area/ethnic studies. Discussions about these inequalities, although situated, can have multiple bearings and implications for people other than those studied. Perhaps this is one of the best consequences of transnational studies where borders are blurred and movements become sites of analysis of patriarchy, colonization, racism, classism, and resistance and accommodation strategies.

Transnational feminism informed by diasporic studies and postcolonialism create spaces with complications and contradictions. While both transnationalism and postcolonialism are critiques of inequality and colonization, their treatment of those at the margin could remain hegemonic. Therefore, I take caution in promoting transnationalism or postcolonialism as the master narrative of critiques and theoretical framework. Feminist practices informed by postcolonialism and transnationalism are complete with alliances, solidarities, resistances,

subversions, and complicities that need to be constantly interrogated, deconstructed, and reconstructed.

Postcolonial studies offer the framework to explore the relationship between women's negotiations and nationalist discourses. I agree and understand the silence in women's histories, their sufferings, and find that postcolonial theories provide a space for critiquing colonialism and representing women's voices albeit in crisis. I am not uncritically accepting postcolonialism as a theoretical framework for this study. Postcolonialism provides a springboard for the Indian national elites to gain power and produces the nation state in their own reflections rendering "Others" silent and disciplined. On the other hand, transnationalism provides a framework to understand inequalities produced in today's technologically enhanced globalized era due to trans-cultural movements. Utilizing a feminist perspective to address transnational issues allows an examination of the relational production of women across multiple boundaries (if they exist or if they are perceived to exist).

The context of higher education provides the backdrop of a U.S. cultural canvas that can portray a restrictive gendered picture of a woman in ways similar and different from India. The politics of multiplicity through/with/against which women need to be analyzed and understood sometimes seem like an endless and vague agenda that beg redefinition in terms of scope and purpose. Questions like how female Indian graduate students own their subject positions provide a certain amount of scope and purpose while preserving the multiplicity and contingency of subject positions.

Through these overlapping literature reviews, I established that colonizing discourses are pervasive in creating Western academic knowledge that is applied to culturally incompatible contexts. However, I conceded to the impossibility of a space where de/colonizing

epistemologies can function without the influence of any oppressive or foundational regime of colonizing discourses as they both exist together in relations. Finally, I demonstrated a silence in research about South Asian international students and their invisibility in discussions about Asian International students in the U.S. Since South Asian students, especially Indian students do not face the same language and cultural barriers as students from South east Asia, their negotiations of their experiences in the U.S. can demonstrate salient features of multiple social structures, local and globalized discourses without being confounded and justified due to language barriers. Therefore, this study is designed to integrate and interrogate the theoretical ideas presented in transnational feminism and postcolonialism to contribute to the existing “field” of higher education in the U.S. a legitimized gendered authoring from a group that has been rendered mostly invisible or silent when considering experiences of international students.

CHAPTER 3: OTHERING RESEARCH, RESEARCHING THE OTHER

Trying to find the other by defining otherness or by explaining the other through laws and generation is, as Zen says, like beating the moon with a pole or scratching an itching foot from the outside of a shoe. (Minh-ha 1989, p. 75)

Though I tried I could not really write my story. Each time I tried to write, everything splintered into little bits, I could not figure out a line or theme for myself . . . I had no clear picture of what unified it all, what our history might mean. We were all in it together, that's all I knew. And there was no way out. (Alexander 1991, p. 28)

Introduction

Recall that the purpose of this research is twofold. On the one hand, I am interested in exploring the life experiences of transnational female Indian graduate students in U.S. On the other hand, I am interested in examining how methodology is informed by de/colonizing theories. Of special interest are the calls for specific departures that can be made from de/colonizing perspectives.

The specific research questions that I ask are:

1. What relations and practices are enabled by the material and discursive conditions of transnationalism, and how, in turn, do the two female Indian graduate students construct/maintain/dismiss subject positions within those relations and practices?
2. What expectations do the two female Indian graduate students retain from their Indian upbringing? What expectations do they discard or modify? How do two female Indian graduate students conceptualize their modification of expectations?

3. How do two female Indian graduate students conceptualize their academic experiences (e.g. classroom experiences, relationships with advisors, expectations for performance, their role as graduate assistants, relationships with other students, interactions with people of diverse backgrounds, etc.)?
4. As a transnational researcher studying other transnationals, how do I incorporate decolonizing methodologies into my research? What deliberate moves can I make to decolonize my work? What are the limits of possibility for decolonizing methodologies given my colonized education and upbringing?

I first ground my thinking in de/colonizing methodologies and discuss how these methodologies played a role in this research. Embedded in these discussions are various de/colonizing approaches incorporated in data collection, issues of voice, research sites, and subjectivities. This research is a case study informed by both interpretive and de/colonizing epistemologies. There is no separate section discussing subjectivities; instead, the reader will find subjectivities expressed and integrated in every part of this chapter and throughout this dissertation without being confined to a separate section, thus heeding the criticisms and cautions put forth by feminist researchers like Wanda Pillow (2003) to avoid a narcissistic “romance of the speaking subject” (Lather 2001, p. 206).

Since this research is informed by de/colonizing epistemologies, I integrated de/colonizing methodologies throughout the research in response to the fourth question. Where possible, I discuss specific departures from colonizing assumptions and ways that those departures inform the study. Note that the departures do not comprise an exhaustive list, but rather represent only those that could be attended to and identified.

Finally, it is not my claim that the methodological approaches, departures, findings, and analysis employed in this study are novel in their presentations. Operating from multiple theoretical, methodological, and substantive frameworks, this study at times emphasizes previously stated arguments and at other times demonstrates how certain departures played a role in constructing findings. I suspect that another researcher could have come to these findings from another approach, but by discussing the limits and possibilities of methods employed in this study, I show the tensions and contradictions influencing the data collection, analysis, and re-presentation of this study.

Research Framework: De/colonizing Epistemologies and Methodologies

Patti Lather (1992) describes methodology as the theory of knowledge and the interpretive frame informing choices of methods and procedures used in a study. Michael Crotty (1998) states that methodology is a strategy, a blueprint linking methods to outcomes. Like Lather, Crotty emphasizes the need for epistemological and theoretical grounding in research methodology. Using these arguments, I situate this study in the current moment of qualitative research, knowing all too well that this moment is never fixed, discrete, or foundational to this study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer a comprehensive tracing of the moments in qualitative research. They identify a traditional period in the early 1900s, followed by a modernist phase ending in the 1970s which included works of feminism, phenomenology, critical theory, and ethnomethodology and which attempted to honor the voices of the unvoiced. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identify a third moment, called “blurred genres” (p. 15), in which qualitative researchers used multiple paradigms, epistemologies, and strategies to conduct their research. This moment ended in the mid-1980s. The fourth moment in qualitative research marks the crisis of

representation and continues to influence current research as reflexive writing is privileged and validity, reliability, and objectivity are critically interrogated. The fifth moment is the “postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 17) informed by the arguments presented in the crisis of representation.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the sixth and seventh moments are currently upon qualitative researchers, although I argue and elaborate shortly about the simultaneous existence of all of the moments. The sixth moment, known as the “postexperimental moment,” represents the “triple crisis” of representation, legitimation, and praxis. The seventh moment is the moment of the future informed by the triple crisis, which asks questions such as, “Is it possible to effect change in the world if society is only and always a text?” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 17).

I do not doubt that some progression in qualitative research has been linear. However, in the current moment of qualitative research, genres, epistemologies, paradigms, and crises are not discretely located in their respective moments. Instead, these moments often exist and inform each other simultaneously. Therefore, de/colonizing methodologies can exist in multiple moments, questioning and troubling the limits and possibilities of each and all of the moments. For example, this research is grounded in transnational feminist methodologies while acknowledging the crisis of voice, representation, and legitimation and interrogating/abandoning an authorial positioning of the researcher, thereby de/colonizing multiple moments of qualitative research.

I now turn to decolonizing methodologies as used in this research. Linda Smith’s (1999) groundbreaking text *Decolonizing Methodologies* provides a poignant description and criticism of the imperial nature of research. Smith states:

Research “through imperial eyes” describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only idea which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings. It is an approach to indigenous peoples which still conveys a sense of innate superiority and an overabundance of desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous peoples – spiritually, intellectually, socially, and economically. It is research which from indigenous perspectives “steals” knowledge from others and then uses it to benefit the people who “stole” it. Some indigenous and many minority group researchers would call this approach simply racist. It is research which is imbued with an “attitude” and a “spirit” which assumes a certain ownership of the entire world, and which has established systems and forms of governance which embed that attitude in institutional practices. These practices determine what counts as legitimate research and who counts as legitimate researchers. (Smith 1999, p. 56)

Smith’s criticism, although from an indigenous Maori perspective, can be extended to other de/colonizing contexts in which certain kinds of knowledge production are privileged over others. This is not to say that all research is imperialist and racist in its intention or practice. However, research informed by Western imperialistic discourses conducted on/with non-Western participants and packaged and represented in the Western academic world carries within it some inherent impossibilities of capturing the voices of the subaltern (Spivak 1993). The argument is not that the subaltern cannot be heard, but that there exist gaps and untransferabilities due to the “untranslatability of the ‘third world’ experiences into ‘first world’ imperialist discourse” (Chow 1993, p. 38). It is within such impossibilities, contradictions, and tensions that this research is situated.

Based on the works of multiple de/colonizing scholars (Rich 1978; Alexander 1991; Shohat 1993; Spivak 1993; Sunder Rajan 1993; Gandhi 1998; Shohat 1998; Smith 1999/2002; Dave, Dhingra et al. 2000; Narayan and Harding 2000; Mohanty 2004; Mutua and Swadener 2004), de/colonizing research interrogates the imperialistic foundations that privilege Euro-American constructions of knowledge and silence knowledge constructed by the marginalized. When theoretical and methodological discourses are informed by oppositional standpoints, then de/colonizing work becomes problematic. De/colonizing methodologies need to further interrogate the assumptions that are considered foundational in research, such as voice (Spivak 1993; Caputo 1997; Lather 2000), data (St. Pierre 1997; Roulston, Baker et al. 2001), field (Visweswaran 1994; Britzman 1995; Butler 1995), analysis (Kondo 1990; Lather 1993; Richardson and St. Pierre 2004), and representation (Minh-ha 1989; Chaudhury 2000; Kaomea 2004). I situate transnational feminism as the primary theoretical perspective informing the de/colonizing aspect of this dissertation both epistemologically and methodologically.

I read transnational feminism as “feminism from a global-minded and multi-leveled perspective, where the goal of feminism is no longer simply to empower women or to analyze gender ideology. By itself, the empowerment of women does not change the entrenched structures of domination, especially when we consider that women themselves are a diverse group, no more essentially wise or moral than any other group” (Stone-Mediatore 2003, p. 130). In other words, echoing Mohanty’s (2004) concerns, I align with the ideas that support a multi-pronged approach to understanding and developing diverse forms of resistances against inequalities driven by globalized social and economic structures and migration of people. While conducting research using transnational feminist frameworks to study transnational female Indian graduate students, Chow’s reminder is especially helpful:

The task that faces Third World feminists is not simply that of animating the oppressed woman of their cultures, but of making the automatized and animated condition of their own voices the conscious point of departure in their interventions. This does not simply mean they are, as they must be, speaking across cultures and boundaries; it means that they speak of the awareness of “cross-cultural” speech as a limit, and that their own use of the victimhood of women and the Third World cultures is both symptomatic of and inevitably complicitous with the First World. (Chow 1992, p. 111)

Simply put, informed by Western discourses, it is easy for me to become automatized and to essentialize oppression, liberation, and agency through/with/against my de/colonizing epistemologies and methodologies. As a transnational scholar in training in the U.S., I am painfully aware of my complicated positioning in conducting research on other female Indian graduate students. I realize that despite my best intentions to de/colonize my work, I cannot remain neutralized in what I produce because it is always already colonized through my British/Indian/Canadian/U.S. upbringing, training, and presentation of my work in the colonizer’s language to Western academia.

Put another way, I write in English to capture the experience of people whose language of communication is a hybridized form of Hindi and English already in its colonized package. I write to translate the cultural productions of experiences of “Others,” unwittingly taking on the role of a “Third World” broker in a format acceptable in Western academic gatekeeping. These complicated situations and actions continue to create im/possibilities in which I exist, function, interrogate, and abandon thoughts, beliefs, and epistemologies.

I recall Smith’s (1999, pp. 1-3) warning that “scientific research is implicated in the worst excess of colonialism . . . Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity

that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions, and questions about researcher's subjectivities, posturing, and interpretation arise." Certainly I am not an innocent actor, nor can I speak for anyone else, or presume that the ethnographic 'Other' is oppressed based on Western liberatory discourses that fail to respond to non-Western cultural perspectives. This is not to say that there is no suffering or that social systems do not create and maintain various forms of inequality and oppression. Rather, the argument is that resistance to such systematic inequalities must be simultaneously grounded in and interrogated by multiple de/colonizing discourses that attempt to cut across multiple borders and issues, in order to break apart oppressive regimes and nullify their effects.

Since this research is informed by transnational feminist methodologies, experimentation with multiple forms of data collection, analysis, and representational strategies informs the methodological approach. Additionally, attempts to blur the boundaries between the researcher and the researched fit in well with transnational feminist methodologies, as with other feminist and de/colonizing methodologies. However, even with the best of intentions to blur boundaries between the researcher and the researched, it is impossible for me to abandon all authority as a researcher. The awareness of the gaze and control I continue to possess as a researcher justifies further the privileging of the participants' critical agencies.

Transnational feminist methodologies acknowledge that this research is never complete. I do not have complete access to the participants' lives, making this research only a frozen frame of collective moments. As a transnational feminist, I was data hungry and could not turn off my researcher self during any interaction with the participants. Using conversations as a form of inquiry, all interactions became data to me. Sensing such hunger, Neerada, one of the participants, cautioned me that, "You would never finish your dissertation, because the subjects

are still speaking.” Thus, conceding that the data are never real, true, complete, or holistic despite my attempts to “capture ‘em all,” this research is a negotiation of my effort to abandon authority and privilege participants’ critical agencies and voices, all the while recognizing the inevitable failure.

Feminist theories promote work that is for and about women. From a transnational feminist perspective, I was unable grasp how I can work “for” women without the assumption of a certain power which gives me the ability to work “for” them. This notion of working “for” someone situated the participants without the kind of agency that I awarded to myself as the researcher. This position assumed that the women in this study were not capable of working “for” themselves, and that therefore the researcher was needed to take on such liberatory role to facilitate working together and for the participants.

Hence, transnational feminism disrupts the liberatory goals of feminist research while underscoring the problem of voices that can never be heard in their entirety, the situational and contextual nature of experiences, and the reflexivity that is embedded in multiple power relations. Examining power relations raises issues of transparency and the role of a native researcher to make things clear to gatekeepers who might be unfamiliar with the culture of those studied. The task of bringing transparency to understanding creates a risk of the researcher becoming the “Third World broker,” a co-opted and essentialized “Third World” position that places the responsibility of “border crossings” only on the colonized.

The tensions created by transnational feminism’s advocacy of social change and interrogation of liberatory discourses put this research in a messy space. On the one hand, liberatory discourses are seductive, especially when the material conditions of many women’s lives are affected by social systems of oppression. On the other hand, Smith’s (1999) criticism of

such liberatory epistemologies situates certain notions of liberation as part of imperialistic discourses. She states that, “research is probably one of the dirtiest words” as it is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1). Furthermore, Smith (1999) cautions:

Many researchers, academics and project workers may see the benefits of their particular research projects serving a greater good “for mankind,” or serving a specific emancipatory goal for an oppressed community. But belief in the ideal that benefiting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of ideology as it is of academic training. It becomes so taken for granted that many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this ideal and are natural representatives of it when they work with other communities. (p. 2)

Informed by Smith’s criticism, as a transnational feminist researcher I question my liberatory urges, reminding myself that just because participants have allowed me into their lives this does not give me the right to tell them they are oppressed or to offer consciousness-raising to liberate them from their oppression. It is at this juncture that I search for alternate purposes²⁴ for research and continue to inform myself through multiple decolonizing discourses.

Inspired by transnational feminism, I present stories of women that demonstrate their empowerment, acts of resistance, and accommodations that exist in the participants’ lives prior to the research and would continue even after the research. I ask questions informed by Stone-Mediatore’s (2003) work about the relations of dominations in the participants’ lives, realizing that social struggles cannot be separated discretely into categories of race, class, gender, and nationalities but are intertwined with each other. The question then becomes one of cultural

²⁴ Some alternate purposes include developing dialogues about the effects of local, communal, and global social systems on the lives of transnational women. Through these dialogues, people could be inspired differently to become (or not become) agents of change, develop coalitions, and challenge the status quo of higher education.

understanding and the “politics of location” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994), in which normalized and naturalized discourses work to maintain social structures of inequality. The work of transnational feminism can be to initiate discussions about the specific ways historical and cultural contexts connect multiple oppressive practices such as patriarchy, colonialism, and neo-colonialism in local and global spaces.

However, I want to clarify that transnational feminist epistemologies are not used in this research with the intention of creating a binary opposition between Western liberatory discourses and de/colonizing transnational discourses, thereby constructing countercultures with their own forms of hegemony and alienation. Instead, with the utmost honesty I agree with Gloria Anzaldúa when she imagines a day of affirmation for her people:²⁵

On that day I say, “Yes all you people wound us when you reject us. Rejection strips us of self-worth; our vulnerability exposes us to shame. It is our innate identity you find wanting. We are ashamed that we need your good opinion, that we need your acceptance. We can no longer camouflage our needs, can no longer let defenses and fences sprout around us. We can no longer withdraw. To rage and look upon you with contempt is to rage and be contemptuous of ourselves. We can no longer blame you, nor disown the white parts, the male parts, the pathological parts, the queer parts, these vulnerable parts. Here we are weaponless with open arms, with only our magic. Let’s try it our way, the *mestiza* way, the Chicana way, the woman way.” (Anzaldua 1987/1999, p.110)

De/colonizing research must not perpetuate another set of binaries to justify the critiques it launches. Therefore, I have no intention of becoming or re-presenting the voice on the alternate side of Western imperialism, thus scoring some form of moral or rhetorical victory by rendering

²⁵ By “her people,” I refer to Anzaldúa’s description of people with Chicana, Mexican, Indian, and Anglo heritages creating a *mestiza*.

participants or groups of people as oppressed and pointing the blaming finger towards Western discourses. Therefore, in the spirit of de/colonizing methodologies, I, too, accept my “white parts, male parts, queer parts, pathological parts, and vulnerable parts” and welcome the borderless, multi-pronged, globalized coalitions amongst people who are “comrades in the struggle” (hooks 2000) for democratic existence and for erasing social structures of inequalities. It is in this spirit of transnational feminism that I ground the methodological framework for this research.

Theoretical Influence on Methodology

From transnational feminist perspectives, abandoning questions that analyze, interpret, or re-present women as defined by their object status creates a space for examining the production of gendered subject positions like, victims of male violence, colonialism, familial systems, economic developments, and universal dependents (Mohanty, 2004, p. 23). Therefore, methodologically, I worked with an autoethnographical gaze that continuously interrogated the objectified subject positions through which I authored the participants. I collaborated with other transnational feminist scholars, qualitative scholars, and the participants to continuously challenge and re-construct my understandings. Consequently, I re-presented findings in their own tension-filled spaces where suffering and resistance occurred simultaneously, describing such tensions with one eye on the material consequences of such lived experiences and another on the discursive gaze of decolonizing feminist discourses that attend to the impossibilities of such construction.

As a result of being in a “messy” theoretical and methodological space, this research incorporates some conventional forms of qualitative research and some departures that are specific to the epistemological framing of the research. Some of the departures were informed by theoretical and methodological work in projects prior to the dissertation. Other de/colonizing

departures were constructed within the context of the research. Therefore, as this chapter continues, I urge the reader to keep in mind that de/colonizing epistemologies are weaved through the research design, data collection, analysis, and representation, while specific points of departure are noted. In the next section, I discuss de/colonizing departures that I intended to make prior to conducting the research.

Will to Know

Generally speaking, as I enter into the contractual research space with the participants, I enter into a relationship that involves multiple forms of negotiation and desire. On the part of the researcher there is an obvious “will to know,” and on the part of the participant there are performances and negotiations through which she expresses herself. Specifically,

Some of what occurs in an interview is verbal. Some is non-verbal. Some occurs only within the mind of each participant (interviewer or interviewee), but it may affect the entire interview. Sometimes the participants are jointly constructing meaning, but at other times one of them may be resisting joint constructions. (Scheurich 1997, p. 67)

Therefore, the process of research interviewing and by extension gathering data in research is rife with ambiguity and contradictions. With this realization I question the “presumptive agency” with which I would otherwise enter the research space. I use the term “presumptive” here to describe some of my colonial assumptions which might lead me to expect the participants to answer my questions in a way that is helpful towards my research questions. I might further assume that if they do not, then with appropriate techniques of questioning and probing I would be able to “extract” the data I need from my participants, positioning my research agenda at the center of our conversations. My agency is presumptive because although I

am aware of the fluid nature of the co-construction of meaning in the interview process and the participant's right to exercise her agency, I may not identify my desire to know and understand the participant's experiences in a way that informs my research as a colonizing gesture. Figure 1 is a representation of this presumptive agency through which I might author myself.

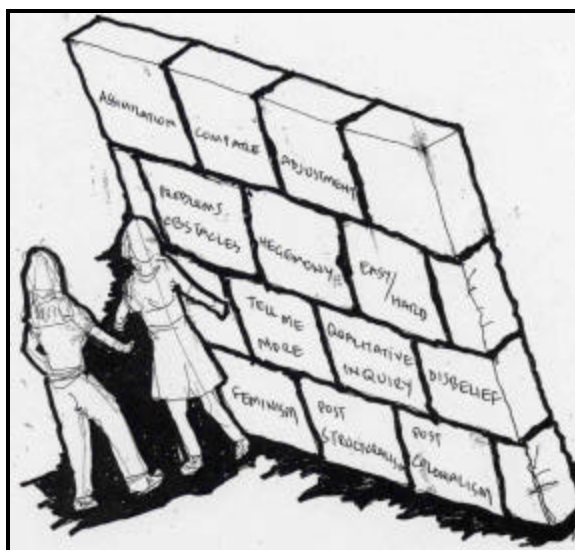


Figure 1: Wall of presumptive agency

The figuration in the wall of presumptive agency is inspired by the movement of a male singer, Usher F. Ludacris, in a hip hop video. In this video, Ludacris positions himself in front of a woman whose back is against the wall. Ludacris leans towards the female as she leans back and he says, "When I move you move and that's like that." When the woman stands up straight, Ludacris leans on to her again and repeats the same words as the woman leans back on the wall. This figuration produces the impossibility of research where, as a researcher, I feel that given the appropriate methodologies I would be able to extract helpful information by "cornering" my participants through the strong posturing of a "will to know." The wall at the back of the participant in Figure 1 is constructed through the contesting epistemologies that inform my methodology.

However, questioning this will to know leads me to realize, as Scheurich noted above, that participants can exercise their own agency and resist joint constructions of meaning. I am reminded of hooks' criticism of a centralized researcher agency:

I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew.

I am still author, authority (hooks 1990, p. 151).

The wall of presumptive agency demonstrates the building blocks of the epistemology and methodology that inform the strategies I incorporated partially in this study. Armed with open-ended questions and shared understanding, I might have the privilege of interrogating – asking for further explanation of answers. Since the wall of presumptive agency is constructed mostly through my researcher epistemologies it rests on unstable foundations, especially if the interviewee chooses to exercise her agency, rendering the wall invisible and moving to unanticipated and unimagined spaces. Figure 2 depicts one of the possibilities through which a participant can exercise her agency and disintegrate the wall of presumptive agency through which I might structure my inquiry.

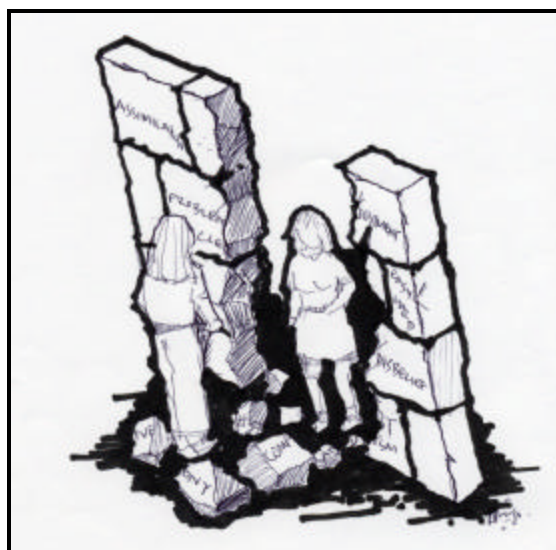


Figure 2: Disintegration of the wall of presumptive agency

The participant in Figure 2 moves according to her own agency, forcing me to attend to the illusory nature of my agency and the strategies of my inquiry. For the participant, the wall behind her does not exist in the same way it does for me. In light of this realization, I questioned the presumptive agency with which I designed this study.

Consequently, this research emerges from the cracked space of the wall, within which I question the commensurability of methodology and de/colonizing theories. One of the departures I then take is the abandonment of some of my “will to know” within the research context. Accordingly, I identified the data collection methods that would allow me to maintain as non-intrusive a posture as I can, given that I am still in the driver’s seat in conducting this study. These data-gathering strategies include conversational interviews, participant observations, and photo- and object-elicitations, which I describe in more detail later in this chapter. These data-gathering strategies do not eliminate my curiosity or my desire to shed light on my research questions. Rather, they change the approach I take in posturing to inform my research questions, keeping in mind that this new posturing might assist me in remaining vigilant and respectful of

collective agencies of the participants²⁶ as co-creators of experiences and meanings during the research process.

Silence and Voice

I argue that giving voice to the unvoiced²⁷ leaves her/him open to being served up as an exotic dish to be consumed or to being viewed as one would view a performing animal in the zoo. By deciding to give voice, the researcher decides to expose communal secrets. So what communal secrets can one choose to disclose? What can be told with participants' silences? While feminism advocates giving voice to those who have historically been silenced, Visweswaran (1994) questions how one is given voice, while Adrienne Rich promotes silence as a site of analysis and resistance:

Silence can be a plan rigorously executed

The blueprint to a life

It is a presence

It has a history a form

Do not confuse it

With any kind of absence. (Rich 1978, p. 17)

Visweswaran (1994) uses silence to look at a participant's refusal to be her subject and she "makes her subject's refusal itself a subject, asking what new forms of subject constitution are forced upon her by now inscribing her silence in speech" (p. 60). In exploring the cultural constructs around speech and silence, I anticipated that the participants would negotiate their speech and silence. This movement from speech to silence is a fluid movement and through

²⁶ I include myself when I speak of participants in the research process.

²⁷ In this context, I am referring to the unvoiced as those from the South Asian ethnicities, ethnographic exotic Others.

Visweswaran's work, I identified the binary between voice and silence as a restrictive tool for this study. One deliberate de/colonizing departure I make is to challenge the binary between voice and silence and to accept that like the participants, I am in constant motion between voice and silence, so the moments in which I choose to speak and those in which I remain silent become moments of critical agency.

Similarly, participants exercised their critical agency in this study by employing voice and deliberate silences strategically to accommodate and resist multiple social structures and their discursive effects. Through plotting such voices and silences I wish to create a continuum between voice and silence, in order to illuminate the functioning of power relations within a space and the construction of subjectivities through these acts of accommodation and resistance. Building on Minh-ha's argument regarding the speaking subject, hooks' criticism of the centrality of the researcher's position, and Spivak's assertion that the subaltern has no voice, I reconceptualize speech and silence. If every act of commission is contingent upon countless omissions, then voice functions through silence. This means I can and should analyze silence within the context of who is speaking, what is being said, and (especially my concern here) what is *not* being said, as well as who is listening within each oration.

What is so de/colonizing about plotting silence? The silences discussed are not always imposed silences, but may be purposeful and chosen. These silences emerge from a space of marginality, of not belonging, and of knowing the limits and possibilities of certain subject positions. Those with a voice have been associated with power and representation, thus creating a dualism of power and oppression between the voiced and the unvoiced. Disrupting this binary would mean asking the one with a voice to unlearn his/her privilege, listen, and interrogate silence in a way that has not been done before. What is the compulsion to speak? What are the

consequences for feminism of privileging speech and rendering silence invisible, passive, and without agency? Questions that are of interest to this study involve exploring how silence functions in the participant's life; what does it do for the participant? How does silence expand or restrict possibilities?

Nevertheless, silence as a de/colonizing tool is not free from its own contradictions. How can de/colonizing work represent the voices of those who do not speak and who still combat previous silences in research and history? Linda Smith expresses concern about the effects of de/colonizing frameworks:

In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent. Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively does not help people to improve their current conditions. (Smith 1999/2002, p. 3)

Smith recommends naming all the spaces of marginalization and resistance to “address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice” (p. 4). I argue that a continuum of silence and voice makes visible all spaces of marginalization while addressing issues of unbalanced power relations, discursive effects, and participants' negotiations.

Research Design

This research is a case study of the socio-cultural negotiations of two female Indian graduate students pursuing higher education in the U.S. during their first year of stay in the U.S. In this section I situate the use of case study in this research and move to discuss other elements of design, including participant selection, gaining access, and data collection methods.

Case Study

Multiple definitions of case studies inform this research; for example, “Case studies are reports of alternative paradigm inquiries” (Lincoln and Guba 2002, p. 213), yet the case study “does not implicate any particular approach” (Wolcott 1992, p. 36). Yin defines case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 1994, p. 13). While Wolcott defines case study as an end-product of research, Merriam asserts that a “qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam 1988, p. 21). In her later work, Merriam adds to her understanding of case studies by stating that, “I have concluded that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (Merriam 1998, p. 27). Though Merriam advocates for a boundary or identification of the scope of a study, she acknowledges that there is freedom in what might be conceptualized as a case. A case may involve studying a person, program, policy, or any other phenomenon that is intrinsically bounded by the interest of the researcher (Merriam, 1998).

It is difficult to understand how a case study can be “holistic” because the experiences of the participants can never be captured in their entirety or placed in neat categories, regardless of the amount of time spent in the “field.” The researcher is only capable of capturing a freeze frame of a participant’s life: a pattern of negotiations, understandings, and experiences during the course of the study but not necessarily one that remains stable over time and space. Such depictions allow us to ask questions perhaps not previously asked, and then work toward specific understandings to create “different kinds of knowledge and produce that knowledge differently”

(St. Pierre 1997). The participants' lives are fluid and continuously evolving, so "holistic" may be a permanently deferred concept.

Merriam (1998) notes that a case study provides a vivid and lifelike experience within a contextual situation; knowledge of the case under study is developed by the reader's interpretations and insights. Extending this argument, one can assert that knowledge of the case study is developed not only by the reader but also by the participants, the researcher, and the gatekeepers, all of whom negotiate and produce a collaboratively dis/agreed upon production which then gets taken up by the readers through their own negotiations with/through/against their multiple subjectivities. Furthermore, Merriam (1998, p. 13) states that case studies can be responsible for discovering "new relationships, concepts, and understandings" inductively rather than deductively.

Certainly an inductive approach to case study can develop an understanding of relationships and concepts. However, how can one really assert what is new, known, or unknown? For example, what I write might not be something new to the participants who might have known and perceived these relationships in their lived experiences for a while. What is new to the Western academic world may not be new to the South Asian academic world. Not being able to exhaust all possible sources of information, it would be difficult to claim novelty. Rather, with the researcher's clarification of the purpose of research (i.e., to understand, emancipate, deconstruct, etc.²⁸) the reader can determine whether the research has accomplished its purpose and what s/he got out of the research. This research, while idiosyncratic, can be transferable on various grounds including practices in higher education, hegemonic effects of colonization, and patriarchal effects on higher education. There might agreeable head nods through which readers take up various aspects of familiarity when reading. There might also be disagreeable

²⁸ I am using Lather's (1991, p. 7) continuum to demonstrate various goals of postpositivist inquiry.

headshakes, which could be equally informative, showing the gaps in subjectivities and creating fertile grounds for dialogues across epistemologies. Hence, not all research can promise a demonstrable new relationship.

Adding to two other researchers' understanding of case studies, Bromley (1986) states that the purpose of a case study is "not to find the 'correct' or 'true' interpretation of the facts, but rather to eliminate erroneous conclusions so that one is left with the best possible, the most compelling, interpretation" (p. 38). Hamel and colleagues (Hamel, Dufour et al. 1993) posit that the case study "has proven to be in complete harmony with the three words that characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining" (p. 5).

Bromley's (1986) perspective of case-study research being "true and erroneous" implies that there are some benchmarks that one needs to measure up to when conducting case-study research. But what are such benchmarks and how are they assured or established? Who decides what is erroneous – journal editors, dissertation committee members? What if there are disagreements between different academic gatekeepers about how research on a specific case study is approached? Would that be an erroneous case study, thereby implying that researchers should aspire to universal agreement? What if dis/agreements vary culturally and my justification can be legitimized in one publishing space and not in another? Would that mean that my interpretations are erroneous? Or should it be the goal of research to get head nods from everyone? Is this possible, realistic, or even desirable? It is unlikely that any research would have such universal appeal that all parties would agree that the best possible, most compelling interpretation was made, because people are differently moved by stories and depictions.

Therefore, the goals in presenting this research are to demonstrate how interpretations were made and how limits and possibilities were constructed to cut across several foundational

assumptions and binary-driven concepts. The reader then lends credence to it as it fits her/his perspectives, which cannot be exhaustively predicted or anticipated. This is not to say that I do not have a current or future readership in mind. The re-presentational negotiations would be contingent on the space in which the research is published and the explicit and implicit expectations of that space. Despite the researcher's best attempts, the standards for best possible interpretation would vary in these spaces.

Hamel et al.'s statement about the harmonious nature of case study and use of terms like description, understanding, and explanation do not address the contingency of meanings residing on varied cultural understandings. To *describe*, a researcher negotiates multiple subject positions, collaborates with the participants, and consults with people such as journal editors or dissertation committee members to develop a finalized description. The term *understanding* must always be considered in relation to multiple subject positions and contexts. Thus, although the researcher's "*explanation*" might align with her/his understanding and description, it could leave gaps in such alignment with the readers. With competing discourses and subject positions, instead of a harmonious symphony, I am more likely to produce a cacophony of dissonant voices, a *rashomon* – a complicated narrative from multiple differing perspectives.

Furthermore, Hamel et al.'s assertion assumes that language is holistic, fixed, and foundational, allowing description, understanding, and explanation to be established and perhaps universalized. But language is not (Bové 1990), and meanings are permanently deferred and fleeting. The best I can do is to convey the messiness and (mis)alignments, state the limits and possibilities of the research, acknowledge what I get out of this research, and communicate the claims, questions, concerns, and directions I want to emerge from the research. Research then

becomes the interaction between process and product, both of which can be claimed as findings amidst contradictions and ambiguities.

Therefore, this research was designed with the broader implications of case study as both a method and an end product. I find value in both Wolcott and Merriam's arguments and see my decision to study the phenomenon of transnational feminism in the two women's lives as both a method of inquiry and an end product. This research was conducted over a 5-6 month time period with extensive visits to the participants' homes (2-3 times per week), informal conversations, photo- and object-elicited conversations, and participant observations during social and cultural events and in the participants' interactions and conversations with other people.

Selection of Participants

Hickory Towers apartment complex is the housing of choice for many recently-arrived Indian graduate students in Arborville, a small southern university town. Hickory Towers contains 30 two-bedroom townhomes, usually all of which are shared by 3-4 Indian students. Based on participant observations and various unplanned informal conversations with residents at Hickory Towers, I provide the following description of the living community and residents of Hickory Towers.

While Hickory Towers remains open to any tenant, most of the Hickory Towers townhomes are occupied by Indian graduate students who are pursuing either a Master's degree or Ph.D. at the University of Arborville. Some older residents of Hickory Towers are pursuing a second graduate degree at the university. The Indian residents of Hickory Towers formed a university-recognized student organization, the Indian Students Association (ISA), which organizes social, cultural, and religious activities for the residents at Hickory Towers and for the

larger Indian student community at the University of Arborville. Since election of executive members for the ISA means visibility in the Indian student community, residents of Hickory Towers vote for one of their own to executive positions in the ISA.

The members of ISA serve as initial contacts for new Indian students arriving at the university. New students usually contact the members of the ISA for information about housing and they are placed in partially occupied or soon-to-be-vacant Hickory Towers townhomes. In the ten years since the organization was founded, the cyclical process of electing members from Hickory Towers into ISA leadership positions and having those student leaders place new students in Hickory Towers has created a thriving Indian student community at Hickory Towers, which is more commonly known as *Haragao* (name of a generic Indian village) amongst the Indian students.

Most Indian students at Hickory Towers arrive in the U.S. after completing a Bachelor's and/or Master's degree in India. They belong to upper- or middle-class families of various castes in India. In some ways, residents in the Hickory Towers community try to simulate Indian college life while strategically adhering to or rejecting particular traditional and cultural values. For example, fearing the loss of culture, Indian residents at Hickory Towers participate in daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations of religious, social, and cultural festivals. Often the Indian residents at Hickory Towers create culturally familiar social environments where they cook and eat together, take day trips to nearby attractions and malls, or watch Indian movies together. Women are expected to learn to cook if they do not already know how to, and men also learn to cook if they do not have a girlfriend or female friend who cooks for them. Rejecting traditional norms surrounding arranged marriages, many residents in Hickory Towers engage in

dating relationships with each other, especially when they do not have to be accountable to parental inquiries about their whereabouts.

While most residents of Hickory Towers enjoyed class and religious privileges in India, those privileges are erased with their status as international graduate students in the U.S. In Hickory Towers, caste privileges are also erased because privileges in Hickory Towers are grounded in how much one knows about surviving in the U.S. and navigating through the spaces of higher education. Privileges are also derived from ownership of a vehicle and a personal computer. Most students either had a personal computer due to their class privileges or they had access to one at the university. However, owning a vehicle clearly marked a student who had been in the U.S. and Hickory Towers for at a year or more. In general, male students who had been in the U.S. for a year or more were most likely to purchase vehicles. Female students, on the other hand, obtained rides from the male residents of Hickory Towers, with the exception of a few who chose to purchase their own vehicle. Owning a vehicle was a sign of privilege, not only because it marked a class privilege, but also because it conferred the privilege of mobility, ease of life and navigation around town, and access to places and information not readily accessible to those who did not have their own vehicles.

The male members of the Hickory Towers community were the primary decision-makers about events and membership roles in the community. The female members aligned with the male members to enjoy the power and privileges of mobility, access, and visibility in the community. Newcomers were expected to respond with some sort of reciprocation when afforded the privilege of mobility and access to information. Sometimes this reciprocation involved cooking for the most socially visible group in the Hickory Towers. At other times reciprocation included hosting a party, hosting a religious ceremony, hosting a movie-watching

gathering, or just spending time with the most socially visible group in Hickory Towers. This socially visible group consisted of mostly male members along with two or three female members. They held the executive positions in the ISA and controlled the funds that paid for events for the Indian students at Hickory Towers and in the University of Arborville community. Newcomers were expected to align with this core group if they wished to receive the recognition and privileges that came with group membership.

However, membership came with a price. Membership in Hickory Towers implied active participation in all social, cultural, and religious events. The Hickory Towers community situated itself within and outside of Indian cultural traditions. On the one hand, the community tried to enact cultural traditions in the daily lives of the residents; on the other hand, certain members of the community also deviated from expected cultural norms. To enact tradition, certain conservative norms about gender roles were evident when the women were expected to cook or to learn how to cook after they arrived at Hickory Towers. During religious festivals, women took on traditional gender role of decorating shrines and gathering auspicious offerings, just as they would be expected to do in India. Revisiting familiar Indian cultural norms in the larger cultural space of the U.S. allowed many members to cope with a sense of cultural loss affecting their lives in the U.S. However, while Neerada and Yamini both wanted to return to a traditional cultural space, they did not want to do it within the terms prescribed by the Hickory Towers community. Instead, both of them authored their own nostalgic return to cultural traditions based on their imaginations and memories of India.

To integrate themselves into this community, newcomers were expected not only to enact traditional gender roles, but also to offer open access to their living spaces and lives. While no one frowned upon someone's choice to date in the Hickory Towers community, when a woman

called off a relationship she was often criticized, scandalized, and otherwise evaluated on traditional values, while her male partner's reputation remained relatively unscathed. For example, when Neerada's relationship with Ashit ended, established members of the Hickory Towers community questioned Neerada's relationship and her role in it, reminding her that it was not "proper" for Indian girls to break up with their boyfriends. At times, then, membership involved gossiping about other residents in the community and fixing women's roles rigidly, while allowing men to be more flexible in how they authored themselves from varied and negotiated cultural perspectives.

Not all residents of Hickory Towers valued or agreed with the expectations established by those who played central roles in the community. However, those who disagreed with group roles and expectations ran the risk of being marginalized by other members; losing their privileges of mobility, access, and visibility; and becoming the targets of criticism about their choices and character. This was evident in Neerada's and Yamini's cases, as both women were criticized due to their lack of interest in belonging in the Hickory Towers community after two months of being in the U.S.

Many Hickory Towers residents found the initial cultural and social familiarity comforting as they transitioned into their new status as international students in the U.S. However, some residents experienced a progressive upbringing in India in which they were not interrogated about their actions and decisions with anything like the critical gaze that the leaders of Hickory Towers turned on their peers, ostensibly in order to return to a nostalgic space of Indian tradition. If students valued their membership roles, then they accepted the critical "nostalgic" gaze of the community even if they had a progressive upbringing. Conversely, if students didn't value their membership roles in Hickory Towers, regardless of their upbringing

they rejected such memberships. Consequently, many students moved to on-campus graduate student accommodations after staying in Hickory Towers for their first year. Those who remained in Hickory Towers after their first year chose to do so because they valued their membership in the community, and many of these students eventually assumed leadership roles in the Hickory Towers community and in the ISA.

After visiting the Hickory Towers apartment complex a few times prior to the study, I began to make some friends. I was invited to several cultural and religious celebrations. One of the participants in my pilot study agreed to act as a key informant and told me that some new female graduate students had arrived from India. Neerada, one of the participants I met during a cultural festival, agreed to be involved in this study. Yamini, the second participant for this study, was referred to me by another contact from the community.

My sampling method for this dissertation lies at the intersection of three types of purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) describes purposeful sampling as “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (p. 230). Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn “a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Based on Patton’s further typification of purposeful sampling, this study lies at the intersection of criterion, theory-based, and homogeneous sampling.

Criterion Sampling

Since the two participants meet some pre-determined criteria, criterion sampling is one form of sampling that affected the selection of the participants. For this study, the participants needed to be female, Indian graduate students who had been in the U.S. for no longer than 1.0 years. Another criterion informing selection was that at least one participant needed to be in the social sciences rather than the hard sciences, which is a common path for Indian academics. The

final criterion for selection included participants sharing a common language other than English with the researcher. Following is a chart of how the participants for this study met the pre-determined criteria.

Criteria	Neerada	Yamini
Female Indian graduate student	✓	✓
Duration no longer than 1.5 years in U.S.	Been in U.S. for ~ 3 months	Been in U.S. for ~ 6 months
At least one participant outside of hard science discipline, preferably in social sciences	Business Marketing	Veterinary Science
Share at least one native Indian language	Share Hindi in common	Share Hindi in common

Table 1: Matching pre-determined criteria with participants

Theory-Based Sampling

Patton (2002) observed that theory-based sampling is a “more conceptually oriented version of criterion-sampling . . . The researcher samples incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs” (p. 238). In this study, I was particularly interested in exploring the theoretical boundaries of transnationalism and what it means in the context of the lives and material conditions of those who are in-between nations, states, cultures, and spaces. These participants have multiple shifting subject positions, histories, and politics of location that shape them and influence the way they negotiate their experiences. Therefore, through this case study I am able to document incidents, a part of the participants’ lives in a specific time period (i.e., early stages of transnationalism) as they begin to negotiate the limits and possibilities of their transnational

status. I explore the role of transnational movement in producing gendered experiences through the participants' negotiations, retention, and dismissal of multiple subject positions.

Homogeneous Sampling

Patton (2002) states that the purpose of homogeneous sampling is to describe a subgroup in depth (p. 234). So while there could be many different kinds of production of gendered transnational experiences, I was most interested in looking at those produced during the early stages of negotiation with a transnational status. For this reason, the participants' short duration in the U.S. worked well for this study, as it allowed an examination of similarities and differences in the production of experiences for recently arrived female Indian graduate students.

Research Site(s)

This study is situated in both tangible and intangible research sites. I present a continuum below to demonstrate the various research sites for this study. Figure 3 shows that research sites are intersected by two continuums. The deliberate and unintentional sites continuum represents both the planned and serendipitous nature of qualitative research. Unintentional sites of research could be a movie theater, conversation with colleagues, listening to music--all unplanned sites that nevertheless influence the study. The second continuum refers to the fluidity of access to such research sites. If the sites are tangible and finite, then access is limited by time and space considerations. However, when the sites are intangible--for example, sharing a similar memory with the participants--then access to the site is infinite and unrestricted by time and space issues.

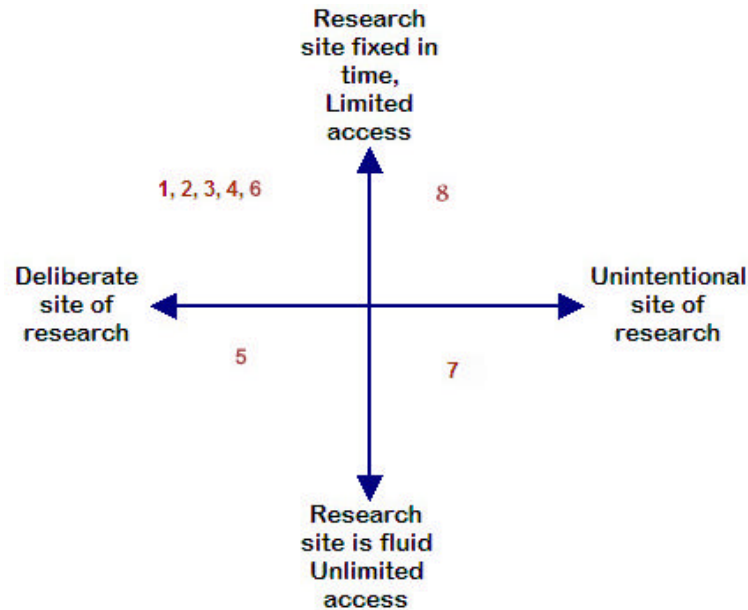


Figure 3: Research Site Continuums

Using the illustration in Figure 3, I plotted the sites from which I have collected data. Most of the sites of research and data collection have been in the top left quadrant, while some unanticipated sites are located in the bottom right-hand quadrant. The following are the sites of research that I have been able to identify:

1. Homes of the participants
2. Classes the participant attends
3. Cultural festivities across campus
4. Social and cultural festivities attended by participants at their apartment complex
5. My home and office
6. Home of other transnational Indian students
7. Memory sites evoked by notions of being a woman, being a minority in the U.S, and growing up in India as I conducted reflexive inquiry and interrogation

8. Unintentional sites of research such as writing group meetings, meetings with advisor, committee members, peer debriefing, unplanned and unanticipated social gatherings, etc.

This list is not exhaustive and there are indeed sites that I cannot consciously identify although I know they inform this study. Sites in the upper-right quadrant could include serendipitous conversations with peers, advisor, etc.

Gaining Access

My means of gaining access to the research sites varied based on the different sites. I had easy access to Hickory Towers due to my prior involvement with the people in Hickory Towers and similarities in cultural background. The Indian graduate students always commended me for being fluent in my native language and being informed about Indian politics, entertainment, and current issues, despite being away from India for over sixteen years. These forms of alignment provided me with easy and unlimited access to Hickory Towers and its cultural and religious festivals.

Visiting the participants in their classes required special permission from their instructors. Most instructors were willing to have me in their classes as a visitor, so I selected classes that fit with my schedule. Some instructors either did not respond to my requests or denied access.

The rest of the research sites (7, 8) were the sites that were not limited by time or access; therefore I had unlimited access to those sites.

Insider-Outsider Positioning: Departing to Fluid Emic and Etic Positions

It would be arrogant of me to assume that because I enjoyed some insider status and easy access to the Hickory Towers community, that I somehow “know” or have more “innate” knowledge of the transnational conditions affecting the participants’ lives. Therefore, remaining

cautious of the “romance of the speaking subject” and how that re-presents the participants’ voices through fluid emic and etic perspectives became an important concern. The binary of the insider/outsider positioning has long been challenged with arguments that what is being studied does not stand outside of the researcher. Kondo (1990), Behar (1993), Abu-Lughod (1992), and Visweswaran (1994) all have argued for a complex and fluid understanding of the researcher/researched positioning whereby the self is transformed by the research process. These authors have also discussed ethical issues and implications of being native researchers who developed strong kinship relations with the participants.

Being situated similarly in the U.S. as a non-resident female Indian student minority, and sharing similar languages, I had some insider status that provided me with access to information I would not have had without these similarities. However, I was an outsider because the participants and their subject positions were developed through various unshared discourses, histories, contradictions, and tensions. It is then both a burden and a privilege to speak from colonized and racialized subject positions while being aware of the crisis of representation, and the contradictions of conducting de/colonizing work in Western academia.

My insider status allowed for shared understandings about friendships and kinship relations with the participants and other members of the transnational Indian student community. Kinship relationships with the participants involved being an elder sister, not in its allegorical form, but in terms of being responsible for the well-being of the participants, providing them with concrete advice, providing an unconditional support system, and maintaining a familial relationship outside the scope of the research. An inability to perform on these levels would have affected the rapport and trust established with the participants.

My outsider status of being in the U.S. longer than the participants, having an already-established support system within the U.S., and having a family in the U.S. to whom I can turn instantly distanced me from the participants. Moreover, leaving India during my early teens I never experienced being in higher education in India. Therefore, I had no similar points of reference for growing up and studying in India despite my diligent efforts to stay connected to the culture through frequent visits to India, reading Indian newspapers and literary texts, listening to various forms of Hindi and Bengali music, and watching Hindi and Bengali movies regularly. Balancing between my insider and outsider assumptions, I engaged the participants in various member-check conversations so that I could modify and verify the rigor of knowledge gained from emic and etic perspectives.

With the insider/outsider position emerged the contesting loyalties of being a native researcher in Western academia. Where should one's loyalties lie and how does one balance these loyalties? What understandings would a researcher want to promote and what myths would s/he like to dispel? Since there were times when the participants sought advice from me, wanted my support, shared intimate details of their lives, and even lived with me²⁹, I had access to information beyond the scope of the research. The responsibilities of being an elder sister³⁰ preceded the role of the researcher always. What this meant was that Neerada and Yamini were not means to an end for this study. There were ends in themselves. Although we started out as strangers and met through the context of the study, my relationship with them as an elder sister and a friend became far more important than my relationship with them as a researcher. With

²⁹ Neerada lived with me for three weeks after she broke up with Ashit as she needed a support system, someone to talk to, and avoid feeling lonely in Hickory Towers.

³⁰ My understanding of being an elder sister meant that I felt the need to be supportive, accessible, and resourceful; to care unconditionally; and to be prepared to dole out advice when it was sought. Chaudhury (2000) experienced similar inside-outsider relationship with her participants where she was expected to take on the role of an elder-sister and dole out advice during some stressful events in the participants' life.

shared cultural understanding, the participants valued the kinship relations more highly than the research relations. Consequently, if either of them had dropped out of the study, the elder sister relationship would have prevailed because it was not contingent on maintaining a researcher/researched relationship. Needless to say, at the end of data collection the kinship relations with both Neerada and Yamini remained and deepened.

I was also conscious of not becoming an essentialized “Third World” informant. Heeding Chow’s (1993) warning, I questioned what needed to be done to address the imperialistic ways of knowing that plague the insider/outsider transnational de/colonizing researcher when speaking of, to, and at an audience. Keeping in mind that I occupy the subject position of a privileged Third World informant in the U.S., my insider/outsider culture crossing within Western academia

[is] made possible by socialized capital, or from the point of view of the indigenous people intellectual or professional elite in actual Third World countries. Among the latter, the desire to “cross” culture means accession, left or right, feminist or masculinist, into the elite culture of the metropolis. This is done by the commodification of the particular “Third World culture” to which they belong. Here entry into consumerism and entry into “Feminism” (the proper named movement) have many things in common. (Naomi Schor, cited in Chow, 1993, p. 69)

The danger in playing such an insider/outsider informant role is the commodification of “native” knowledge produced in Western academia. The commodification of knowledge might not attend to critiques presented in de/colonizing epistemologies, especially when imagining a primary readership of White academics. Therefore, for this research I have primarily imagined a South Asian readership before any other readership. Such posturing calls for different kind of

accountability when a female South Asian transnational scholar in the U.S. studying other female transnational scholars places her accountability first to the people about/with whom she writes. However, since this work is produced in Western academia, and since many South Asian transnationals work in Western academia in the U.S., the insider/outsider negotiations are already influenced by the “elite culture of the metropolis.”

Consent Form and Ethics

Through my kinship relations and insider status, I developed a trusting relationship with the participants. This trust affected the way participants negotiated their consent and membership in the study. While both participants completed the consent form at the outset of the study, their understanding and negotiations of those conditions varied during the study and we continually revisited intent, desires, and ways of participation. For example, Yamini³¹, one of the participants, remained busy during the year with her program, which required her to be out of town frequently. Therefore, I was not able to “hang out” with her as much as I was with Neerada, the other participant, and so our conversations were more structured by time and Yamini’s limited availability.

Furthermore, knowing that I am interested in photo-elicited conversations, both Yamini and Neerada found the exercise to be fruitful and provided me with more information than I requested. Neerada was more interested than Yamini in discussing her experiences through her photography, and so the research space, dialogue, and Neerada’s participation were modified by to her intent to participate more through photo-elicited conversations than through conversational interviews.

³¹ Participant descriptions are provided in the findings chapter and the selection of participants is elaborated earlier in this chapter.

Neither participant had ever taken part in a research project. Therefore, they placed a tremendous amount of trust in me that I would cause no harm to them. This trust and understanding extended beyond providing pseudonyms and fictionalizing identifiable contexts and details. As our relationship grew more into friendship, and later into kinship relations of being an elder sister, lines needed to be drawn around what information I had access to as an elder sister versus as a researcher. Since, as a researcher, I found myself to be always “on” whenever I interacted with Yamini and Neerada, I continued to question how such information affected the way I understood Yamini’s and Neerada’s production of experiences as recently arrived female Indian graduate students in the U.S. The lines between being a friend, elder sister, sometimes a mentor, sometimes a support system, and always a researcher were blurry and any discrete occupation of one subject position without being affected by the others was an impossibility.

Ethically, I faced a dilemma about how to represent such findings when they were shared with me based on the relationship that developed as a result of my insider status and access. Consulting with the participants resulted in remarks like, “I trust you. You can use whatever you think would help your research.” Granting me such privilege became more of a burden than a relief. Continuing to battle the ethical dilemma, I considered the following questions: Do they understand what it means to give me such access and permission? Should the researcher play the role of a protector and tell them the implications of sharing such information? Am I assuming that the participants are too naïve and incapable of understanding the qualitative research process? Is this an arrogant posturing of presumptive agency that I have as a researcher? I asked the participants what they would feel comfortable sharing assuming their mothers or

grandmothers might be reading. This question was designed to identify some boundaries that I did not have before.

As the participants started looking at the data and identified spots that would be appropriate and inappropriate for their families to read, I was reassured about which data could ethically be included in this study. Furthermore, as the participants became more involved in the research process they authored their roles differently. They also understood and negotiated their participation differently. Yamini wanted to see all the interpretive work and data poems I created, whereas Neerada wanted me to share with her my writing, discussions about the study, and how she as a “case” fit into the general purpose of the research. Neerada wanted to help me sort through the data and wanted to meet more frequently than I outlined in the consent form, whereas Yamini kept to a more structured meeting schedule. However, toward the end of the study, Yamini interacted with me in multiple group situations and began to invest more time and interest in the study, becoming an integral part of authoring interpretations.

Through these interactions it became clear that consenting to the research does not fix the manner in which one participates in research. Rather, the consent form and consenting are contingent on varied negotiations of multiple subject positions, life events, and shifting understanding of research. Moreover, through transformatory experiences, the ethics of representation included tension-filled negotiations, which took into account the combined subject positions of a well-wisher, a friend, and even an elder sister. An insider/outsider position complicates the ethics of consent and representation because they are both shifting concepts. Certainly there are no specific ethics or guidelines, but attempting to present the implications and clarify understandings of participation in the research may shed light on the ethical decisions a researcher must make in these situations.

Data Collection Procedures

For a detailed breakdown of specific data collection processes and the volume of data generated through those processes, see Appendix C. After transcription and expansion of field notes, I was able to generate about 350 pages of raw data from the following data collection methods.

Adda/Time-Pass

Typically, Indian students allocate certain times for "hanging out" and conversing across multiple related and unrelated topics. These times are called "adda" in Bengali and "time-pass" in English as used by Indian students. I visited both Neerada's (eight conversations) and Yamini's (five conversations) homes and engaged them in conversations without any pre-arranged, focused interview questions. In the beginning, I would start the session with simple questions such as "How was your day?" or let the participant begin the conversation. Because of the saliency of their experiences, any information they shared with me pointed to issues that stood out for them in various spaces such as formal academia, informal academia, general U.S. culture, or their Indian communities. Towards the end of the conversation, I would go back and clarify thoughts or ideas, or ask some focused questions based on previous conversations. These informal conversations were conducted most often in English, but sometimes they were in a combination of Hindi and English. The choice of language always came from the participants.

Photo-Elicited Conversations

Given the complexity of human behavior, photo elicitation can take understanding to a place that may not be possible within the limits of using text. Advocating this alternate understanding, Harper (2002) writes:

Photo elicitation may overcome the difficulties posed by in-depth interviewing because it is anchored in an image that is understood, at least in part, by both parties. If the interview has been successful, then understanding has increased through the interview process. (p. 20)

Consequently, Harper advocates any form of photo elicitation to cross cultural boundaries and urges researchers to seek a new “framing of taken-for-granted experiences . . . to deconstruct their own phenomenological assumptions” (p. 21).

Similarly, Allen et al. (Allen and Labbo 2001; Allen, Fabregas et al. 2002) and Ziller (1990) conducted cross-cultural research studies through photo-elicitation, in which participants photographed their lives and objects around them to explore their cultural understandings. Integrating photo-elicitation interviews with reflections, stories, and participants’ journals, Allen et al. looked at teachers’ assumptions about culture and learning occurring within the contexts of leisure.

Ziller’s (1990) use of reflective photo-elicitation research with domestic and international students to capture their impressions of American culture displayed distinctly different responses between the two groups. Using inexpensive cameras, the domestic students took pictures of their families and neighborhoods; the international students were more interested in photographing American businesses they perceived to be iconic to the world, such as McDonald’s restaurants, Coca-Cola vending machines, etc. Through his photo-elicited interviews and thematic analysis, Ziller was able to create an understanding between domestic and international students about cultural perspectives and assumptions.

In this study, I provided the participants with disposable cameras and asked them to take pictures of anything that they thought reflected their experiences of being a female Indian

graduate student in the U.S. The participants were excited about taking pictures and soon discarded my cheap disposable cameras and used their digital cameras to create their own personalized digital albums. Both participants enjoyed taking pictures, and Neerada particularly enjoyed expressing herself through photography. While there was a pre-determined timeline, Neerada and Yamini became excited to share their pictures with me. I had anticipated two photo-elicited conversations, but with the participants' enthusiasm, there were five photo-elicited conversations with Yamini and seven photo-elicited conversations with Neerada.

Both Yamini and Neerada called me to talk about their pictures and I recorded these conversations. They put the pictures on a slideshow mode in their computers and the conversation floated from being in the U.S., to cultural assumptions, to arranged marriages, to discovering extraordinary ideas--thoughts without any pre-designed forced or focused questions. Neerada and Yamini initiated the conversations while I chimed in with probes and clarifications. The following is an example of a photo-elicited conversation with Yamini.



Time: Early November, 2004

Yamini: This is New York. I went there the first holiday right after I got into U.S.

Kakali: With whom?

Yamini: With no one. By myself. I booked my ticket and I decided to go to all the places they showed in the movie *Kal ho na ho*, where Shah Rukh Khan went and I wanted to go there and I just went.

Kakali: How did you know where to go, what to do, where to stay and all that?

Yamini: Oh that's easy. The Lonely Planet Guide. That book is my bible. I was able to use that book to figure out all the cool places and I hit them all. My parents were really worried. And I stayed at a youth hostel. The people in the apartment complex thought . . . well God knows what they thought of me and I really do not care. I wanted to go to New York and I went. I knew you would like this trip because I went alone. I am an independent person and traveling alone is ok with me. New York is like Mumbai so I really felt much more at home than I do here in Arborville. I feel more alienated here.

Experience-Box Conversations

Apart from informal conversations, the participants stored artifacts in a box that highlighted their experiences while in graduate school in the U.S. The rationale for this form of elicitation was same as the rationale for photo-elicitation conversations – to elicit information that might not come out in informal conversations. Understandably, there are many events and circumstances through/against which the participants negotiate their experiences. Creative reflective practice became a better way to elicit some of that information than relying only on verbal responses.

I provided the participants with boxes in which both Neerada and Yamini stored objects that represented some aspect of their experiences as a female Indian international student in the U.S. Though both participated in this activity, neither of them enjoyed the activity as it seemed

more unfamiliar to them than taking pictures. Yet these boxes were able to elicit ideas about cultural distances and assumptions which were integrated into the findings. There was one object-elicited conversation per participant, in which the participant initiated the conversation without any prompts or questions. The following is an excerpt from an object-elicited conversation with Neerada.



Neerada: I collected this baby leaf for the experience box. I was sitting by the Creamery, having coffee. I go there whenever I feel lonely and then there were all these leaves on the ground and on the table where I sat. Orange, red, brown, so many big leaves. Then there was this one small dead baby leaf. I felt so sad for that small dead baby leaf. It looked so isolated. Or maybe that I am really stressed out.

Participant Observations

Having an insider/outsider status with the participants, I was part of twelve informal, social, cultural, and religious gatherings where I conducted participant observation. I was mostly informed by the works of Spradley (1980) and Dewalt & Dewalt (2002) when conducting participant observation that promoted an immersion in the socio-cultural contexts in order to

observe the participants, their interactions and activities. Events at which participant observations occurred were never initiated or organized by me. Instead, these were participant- or community-initiated activities to which I was invited either by the participant or by another member of the Indian graduate student community. My membership role towards the beginning of the study was peripheral at first (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 21), changing later to a more integrated role at the request of the participants. For example, when attending a cultural festival called *Garba*, I was expected to join the participants in their dances instead of staying on the side of the room recording notes in my digital voice recorder.

I bought a slim, small digital voice recorder and a digital camera that I carried with me at all times. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, I turned the recorder on either to record my own notes or to record conversations of the participants with other people. However, during these conversations I was also expected to participate in the events, as people would otherwise feel uncomfortable seeing me take notes or speak into my recorder. I took pictures of events, spaces, and interactions to trigger multiple forms of sensory memory.

I expanded the recordings into fieldnotes immediately after each event, integrating jotted notes, verbal recordings, and pictures. In the beginning, knowing that I would not be able to capture all the details while observing, I focused on big patterns of events. Later, as I expanded my fieldnotes, I recorded questions and hunches, and discussed them with the participants and a peer debriefer. My peer debriefer was a member of the Indian graduate student community with training in qualitative methods. After adding the feedback of the participants and peer debriefer to my notes, I continued to write to develop ideas. I recorded 150 pages of participant observation fieldnotes involving Yamini and Neerada.

Written Data: Notes, Journals, and Critical Personal Narratives

Richardson and St. Pierre (Richardson and St. Pierre Forthcoming), in their current and earlier work (Richardson 2000), identify writing as a mode of inquiry informing methodological practices. Richardson delineates writing practices in four categories of notes, whereas St. Pierre explores the contingent construction of knowledge based on our understanding of method and writing. Minh-ha (1989) explores the multiple ways of writing from transnational feminist perspectives. Minh-ha looks at issues of race, class, gender, abilities, and the roles of each in creating a space for knowledge constructed through writing:

Neither black/red/yellow nor woman but poet or writer. For many of us, the question of priorities remains a crucial issue. Being merely “a writer” without doubt ensures one a status of far greater weight than being “a woman of color who writes” ever does...She will sooner or later find herself driven into situations where she is made to feel she must choose from among three conflicting identities. Writer of color? Woman writer? Or woman of color? Which comes first? Where does she place her loyalties? (Minh-ha 1989, p. 6)

I struggled with contested loyalties during this study and anticipated being in this unreconciled space permanently. I participated in a writing group to continue to develop and interrogate ideas and obtain feedback. I continued to imagine multiple audiences as I explored ideas around being a transnational researcher working with other transnational female Indian graduate students. Inspired by Richardson, apart from journaling and writing critical personal narratives, I took notes on various aspects of the study that served as data as well. These included:

1. Data collection notes, which included information about organization, logistics, post-conversational and observational thoughts, and notes from participants' responses after sharing transcripts and findings with them.
2. Notes on emotions, which included feelings, doubts, anxieties, indulgences, assumptions, and expectations that I might have about myself, the participants, and the iterative research process.
3. Instinct notes, which included my hunches, assertions, gaps in my understanding and limits and possibilities of the hunches and assertions.
4. Decision notes, which included some of the ways I made decisions about cognitive selection of data, ways to work with participants, ethical issues, re-presentational issues, and other emergent issues during the research.

While expanding, transcribing, and reading fieldnotes, I kept parallel written accounts of thoughts, understandings, hunches, questions, etc., asking questions like, what is going on here. What are two or three things I know for sure? Where are the silences? etc. and continuing to record my responses relentlessly. Sometimes, until I wrote and explored my ideas, I did not know how to articulate my thinking and its contribution to the research as data.

I looked at my own colonization and how such colonization influenced this study. A colleague agreed to conduct some bracketing interviews which were recorded and transcribed. I conducted several intense free-writing exercises around the interviews and the research to explore and interrogate my subjectivities, in order to remain vigilant with the autoethnographic gaze.

Tacit Data

While I have listed all the tangible forms of data I collected for this research, I cannot ignore the role of those data that are unseen, unheard, undescribed, and unrealized, yet continue to shape and influence the research. I found that there are research spaces in which words were not always adequate to describe emotions, sensual information, dreams, and various forms of (conscious and unconscious) psychological negotiations (St. Pierre 1997) during data collection and analysis. The forms of data produced within these spaces cannot be captured even by the most sophisticated technological resources or the most “accurate and systematic transcription procedures” (Mishler cited in Scheurich, 1995, p. 243). I refer to these forms as *tacit data*, a category that includes information and experiences that constitute alternate ways of knowing which cannot be textually articulated, but which nevertheless inform the study.

For example, while conducting a peer debriefing session, I realized that even with detailed fieldnotes of dialogue, body language, and the site description, the peer debriefer interpreted an interaction with the participant negatively. Certainly not every piece of information can be captured in field notes, but this interpretation alerted me that I knew more than I could articulate, and that my knowledge exceeded the information that could be captured in text. It could have been a shared understanding, a way of being, something that I could not and did not attend to consciously. I remembered feeling the kindness in the participant’s eyes, a feeling of comfort and belonging during our conversations, all of which were expressed only partially in their intensity and effects in my fieldnotes. Some of this information never made it to the representation plate as it did not play any directly relevant role in answering research

questions. This unspoken, unthought, unrealized ontological awareness continued to play a role as I interpreted more tangible forms of data.

Data Transformation and Representation

“Suppose you and I are walking on the road,” said Swamiji, the holyman whose storytelling I was researching in 1985. “You have gone to University. I haven’t studied anything. We’re walking. Some child has shit on the road. We both step in it. That’s shit! I say. I scrape my foot; it’s gone. But educated people have doubts about everything. You say, ‘What’s this?’ and rub your foot against the other.” . . . “Then you reach down to feel what it could be.” A grin was breaking over his face. “Something sticky! You lift some up and sniff it. Then you say, ‘Oh this is *shit!*’ The hand that had vigorously rubbed his nose was flung out in a gesture of disgust. . . . “See how many places it touched in the meantime,” Swamiji continued. “Educated people always doubt everything. They lie awake at night thinking, ‘What was that? Why did it happen? What is the meaning and cause of it?’ Uneducated people pass judgment and walk on. They get a good night’s sleep.” (Narayan 1997, p. 33)

Transforming qualitative data usually involves some form of organization, management, description, analysis, and interpretation of data, with accompanying documentation of the process the researcher used to transform that data into evidence that provides answers to her/his research questions (Wolcott 1994; Lincoln 2002). However, this process is riddled with iterative procedures often without clear entry or exit points. I was aware that the voices of the participants would never be captured in their entirety. Nevertheless, I wanted to remain close to the data despite the tension between voice and transparency.

While I could never completely divorce myself or the decisions I made about data collection, management, analysis, and interpretation from theoretical influences, I wanted the data to be the driving factor, with theoretical arguments supporting the data, thereby avoiding the creation of a preconceived theoretical foundation and locking the data within those foundational borders. Folk understanding can and should become a legitimate site of authoring transnational perspectives, and I continued to embody that belief throughout the research in order to privilege ways of knowing that may or may not have been legitimized or voiced.

In this section I describe the processes and the journeys I took towards data management, analysis, and representation.

Data Management

I organized my data using both electronic devices and paper printouts. Using the software NVivo as a data management tool, I transcribed my tapes, expanded my fieldnotes, and wrote researcher journals. I kept a dated process log every time I opened NVivo, in order to remember my previous actions. In NVivo, I sorted out all photo-elicited interviews, object-elicited interviews, conversational interviews, and participant observations and assigned separate analytical spaces for each of the data collection methods. While writing about the data, I connected to the appropriate data file for quick retrieval. Using writing as a form of inquiry and analysis, I was able to return to previous assumptions, evolving subject positions, and discourses with which I identified as I developed analytical ideas.

The freedom I experienced when using this software resulted from the fact that anything could be used as data as long as the software could create a file for it. Therefore, I connected my entire bibliography and theoretical notes to the dissertation file in NVivo, so that I could browse through electronic references whenever I deemed appropriate. However, NVivo, like other forms

of data management software, is not value neutral, and is informed by certain theoretical frameworks that were different from the ones informing this study. I continued to stay vigilant of the incommensurability of those perspectives with my work so that I would not be falsely seduced by the features of the software. The advantage of the software lay in its ability to conduct sophisticated search and retrieval, which reduced the hours of time I might otherwise have spent looking for a strip of paper data in a detailed filing system.

Moreover, the writing and modeling tools in NVivo allowed me to interrogate continuously, develop, and connect multiple pieces of data in one space as I continued to ask, “What is going on here?” Interrogating my data allowed me to question my subjectivities to maintain an autoethnographic gaze. For example, if I was sure that racialized experiences were playing a big part in the data, I could search for certain key terms and locate the contexts in which they appeared. If the context displayed my written notes, hunches, and questions rather than the spoken data of the participant, I would begin to question the implications of the evidence and the claims warranted from such evidence. Being able to save such searches and write around them allowed me to document reliably my process and thereby offered me the ability to retrace my footsteps when needed.

Maintaining a paper-based binder of all the data was also a useful process as I printed and sorted out conversations, photo- and object-elicitations, participant observations, and written data. I used this binder to tactically connect to the data, move away from the office and reflect on the data somewhere else, and develop alternate ideas. Hence, a combination of NVivo and paper-based organization of my data allowed me to remain messy and organized simultaneously.

Reading through the data, I could not separate one-word or phrased codes into their discrete boxes without acknowledging that they were all intertwined in complex ways. The

participants negotiated their experiences in messy spaces, in contradictory ways. I wanted to capture some aspect of the messiness it would resonate with transnational feminism, which advocates developing an understanding that starts from a site of multiplicity. If the world exists in multiplicity, if people process information in multiple interconnected ways, then sorting, managing, analyzing, and re-presenting the messiness would be commensurable with ways of knowing that remain closer to the participants. Through this process, I continued to question the theoretical influences in my reading of the data to break apart my established ways of knowing in order to discover some alternate forms of knowing.

One such alternate way of knowing came from an Indian Vedic ³² mantra, *Om tat sat*, whose literal translation is: *Om* the vital force is the key element *tat* in all existence *sat* which is culturally understood as that which exists beyond all categorizations. *Om tat sat* is used sometimes in meditation, sometimes as a philosophy, and sometimes as a way to understand the world as it transcends any fixed forms of categorization. Invoking the same philosophy, the participants' racialized experiences were not always separable from their gendered or cultural experiences. These codes existed in ways that were inseparable, creating vital experiences for the participants.

For example, the code "racialized experiences" functioned differently in different spaces, held different meanings, and was negotiated differently by the participants across time and space. Each of those negotiations interacted intricately with other aspects of the participants' experiences, legitimizing that which exists, exists in all its riddles. Thus to understand such intertwined aspect of negotiations and productions of experience, I needed additional ways of knowing to better capture the multiplicity of interactions between time, space, events, negotiations, and contradictions, with room for permanently deferring meaning.

³² Vedas are ancient sacred Indian texts.

I listened to the conversation tapes closely to obtain a sense of more than the textual representation of data, a reminder of how some of those tacit data sources shaped understanding. Then, just as Neerada or Yamini would finish discussing an idea and proceed to talk about something else, I would begin to write about the idea. As I wrote, I began to connect to multiple points in the data either from memory, by searching through the data sources, or by re-reading portions of the data. I developed these ideas based on connections to similar and contradictory ideas, changes in their lives including turning points and epiphanies, and intense reactions to events, people, and circumstances. This process, represented in a single electronic document, became a space for developing ideas while remaining intimately connected to the data.

My initial analytic focus was loosely structured to explore how the participants negotiated their experiences, and to examine the contexts in which those experiences were produced. I was hoping that this focus would provide a starting point that would help me stay close to the data and open up possibilities through writing. I went through the entire data set and began writing every time a different topic came up in the conversations. As I continued with this process I came up with several written pieces linking to multiple pieces within the data. The pieces did not exist independently. However. Instead, they were connected to each other, almost creating a network feeding into and out of one another, mostly because I was influenced by the philosophy of that which exists, exists in all its inseparable complexities.

I returned to the data again and looked for silences and misses, and asked, What else is going on? Wherever there was silence, I made that a point of inquiry and began writing around that idea as well. In re-reading, I assigned “new values to texts ignored or discarded” (Visweswaran 1994, p. 17) in my previous reading. During this entire process I conducted several member checks with the participants, and worked with a local peer debriefer from the

community. Their ideas and suggestions were then added to the stories as points of clarification, providing depth and continuing to build on the complexity through which the participants authored themselves.

I began to look at the written pieces again for patterns and silences. For each of the pieces, I created a demographic chart that outlined who the actors were, where the significance was attached, which outcomes were valued over others, what cultural practices were described by the participant, and where the event occurred. I also created a search based on the various attributes within the demographic charts. This search produced a pattern of events in certain spaces. For example, for Neerada, feelings of cultural alienation were strongest in her formal academic space. Anytime Neerada discussed cultural alienation she returned to experiences in formal academia. Thus, I began to look at the spaces and the experiences produced in those spaces.

Soon I was able to produce a list of events in spaces like formal academia, informal academia, living contexts, alternate communities of support, and memories of India. By now I had written around every idea and connected similar and dissimilar ideas to discuss tensions resulting from the oppressive effects of certain hegemonic discourses. The following is an example of such writing:

Neerada resisted her professor when he was making fun of the students by making a prolonged eye contact which is a clear sign of disrespect and disruption. She still walked away from being tempted to say that she felt awkward or offended that he was laughing at people's papers. Her resistance (*connect to another portion of data*) was an indication of her becoming. She has seen that people argue with their professors here and that it is ok to criticize some professors (*connect to another portion of data*). The most strategic

thing for Neerada to do at that time was to resist in silence (*connect to another portion of the data*) with her body language.

Such interconnected data, listed in spaces where the participants had to function, led me to further analysis and representation of the data as described in the next section.

Data Analysis and Representation Strategies

Analysis began when I designed my research questions and continued as I moved through the research process. Troubled by the loss of the subaltern voices, I invited both Neerada and Yamini to write descriptive vignettes.

These descriptive vignettes were composed using the participants' words throughout the research study. Both participants were intimately involved in composing their vignettes, selecting portions from their speeches and adding ideas and words for clarification and elaboration to the excerpts and phrases chosen for the vignette. They cleaned up certain speech elements (e.g., um, like, you know) to make the text flow better. Informed by my need to create a descriptive self-portrait using our conversations, Neerada and Yamini became excited, and immediately participated in authoring themselves.

We discussed what the descriptive vignette should tell people about the participants. We went back and forth in several rounds of conversation, both in person and via e-mail, until we came to a satisfactory conclusion. For example, for Neerada, we decided that the vignette should capture:

- Neerada's love for her pets
- Her love for the outdoors and her friends
- Her struggles when she chose to study veterinary science

- Some of the ways women are expected to behave in India
- How Neerada pursued her own desires, sometimes in contradiction to her parents' and cultural expectations
- How she was taught not to be authored solely by her class and caste status
- Some of her battles in trying to come to the U.S.
- Some of the loneliness that she faced in the U.S. amidst unfamiliar environments

We looked at the data and started to pick out lines, phrases, and excerpts that matched our criteria. While constructing this vignette, Neerada added more information or altered or abbreviated some expressions to communicate carefully what she perceived were the most appropriate words and phrases to represent her to the anticipated readers of our work.

Once the participants had selected important parts of their lives that they were comfortable sharing, I helped them search through the data and continued to dialogue with them to see why they were including certain parts and what those parts meant for them. We went through three to four drafts per participant before both of us were happy with the alignment of what we produced. My role as a facilitator was to assist the participants with all the information they required in crafting the descriptive vignettes and to do whatever I could to minimize their workload without dismissing their enthusiasm and interest. While they pointed to data pieces and talked through their ideas, I would type, cut and paste excerpts and pictures, and probe for clarification and elaboration.

Once the vignettes were completed, I invited the peer debriefer to read them and she identified points that I had not considered. For example, for Yamini, the peer debriefer suggested that I look at her enhanced sense of Indian-ness in the U.S. and provide some examples because that is a salient aspect of Yamini's negotiations. Once I added the information and checked with

Yamini, the portrait became richer, with thick descriptions of the participants' lives authored mostly through their voices.

After sorting out the data through topics, events, stories, and spaces, I was still burdened by the responsibility of analysis that went beyond sorting, categorizing, and managing. To sharpen my analytical questions, I considered the following questions: What is going on in these spaces? What are the contradictions and tensions? Where are the silences? What are the negotiations and reworking of subject positions in these spaces? I created a chart³³ that offered visual clarity and some answers to these questions (see Appendix D). Furthermore, a revisit to the research questions became a helpful focusing strategy.

Recognizing that there was a performative element in the participants' acts, I looked at ethnodrama as a potential analytical and re-presentational strategy. However, nothing mentioned in ethnodrama connected participants' stories to each other, showing that they existed in relations of accommodation, resistance, contradiction, tension, or support for each other, until I came across a figuration of front and back stage in the writings of Erving Goffman (1997). This figuration of front and back stage became most useful for me in conceptualizing and interpreting the data. Goffman's theoretical framework is not used when implementing the front and back stage idea in this study. Phrases like "in front of the curtains" and "behind the curtains" could serve similar purposes, but seemed clunky to me, so I moved instead towards Goffman's elegant figuration of front and back stages.

³³ The chart in Appendix D served as a form of data reduction. By using writing as a form of inquiry I was able to generate ideas that I organized visually in these charts, providing me with a visually accessible representation of ideas developed during data analysis. I approached the ideas in the charts as continuously shifting, always suspect, and filled with tensions. Therefore, I referred more to my writing than to the charts when I was interpreting the data, but the charts were helpful in presenting an overview of developing ideas.

I followed the literature in performance ethnography to ground the re-presentational strategies. Denzin (2003, p. 14) notes that the “move to performance has been accompanied by a shift in the meaning of ethnography and ethnographic writing.” Denzin privileges performance ethnography because he feels that the “writer-as-performer is self-consciously present, morally, and politically self-aware.” Visweswaran (1994) extends the argument by asserting that there is something allegorical yet tangible about dramaturgical performative acts. Performance ethnographies have the potential of creating a politics of possibilities (Soyini 1998) that can interrogate existing social structures and practices.

Butler, on the other hand (1993, p. 141) states that “there are no original performances, [that] every performance establishes itself performatively as an original, a personal and locally situated production.” Denzin further elaborates on how the writer and the performance come together in performance ethnography:

Focusing on epiphanies and liminal moments of experience, the writer imposes a narrative framework on the text. This framework shapes how the writer’s experience will be represented, using the devices of experience of plot, setting, characters (protagonists and antagonists), characterization, temporality and dialogues; the emphasis on showing not telling. (Denzin 2003, p. 46)

I choose performance ethnography as a re-presentational strategy to highlight the messiness that results from intersections of the researcher and the researched in one space with fleeting subjectivities and assertions.

Saldana (2003) identifies the move to ethnodrama as a relatively new trend in qualitative research. He suggests:

A key question to discern the most appropriate mode of representation and presentation for qualitative research is, will the participant's story be credibly, vividly, and persuasively told for an audience through a traditional written report, video documentary, photographic portfolio, Website, poetry, dance, music, visual art installation, or ethnodrama? If it's the latter, then a qualitative researcher playwrites with data. (Saldana, 2003, p. 219)

I grappled with the question Saldana posed and concluded that a traditional written report could not do justice to the performative acts of the participants, especially when their shuttling between multiple spaces produces the performative actions and re-actions.

I recognized that by juxtaposing the performative spaces against each other, I could "show" instead of tell the reader about the discursive effects of those spaces. I continued to follow Saldana's primer to inform the plotting, character development, deliverance of monologues, and scenography. When creating a plot for performance, Saldana recommends:

Dramatic structures include the number of acts, scenes, and vignettes ("units" to most theatre practitioners); whether the time line of events is chronological or randomly episodic; and whether monologue, dialogue, and/or lyric are the most appropriate narrative forms for its characters. The story line is the sequential arrangement of units within the plot. (Saldana, 2003, p. 220)

Therefore, I identified a storyline that mainly involved episodic encounters in multiple spaces and the participants' subsequent actions and re-actions. These episodic encounters corresponded to the plot of being racialized, gendered, classed, belonging in certain groups, and resisting and accommodating to different socio-cultural expectations.

These episodic encounters were at times chronologically developed and at other times were randomly put together depending on the episode. For example, Yamini was uncomfortable networking at the beginning of her program. Towards the end she was able to develop some networking skills. This representation was chronological. On the other hand, Neerada experienced multiple oppressive incidents in the context of formal academia which I represented in episodic instead of chronological terms.

To develop characters in ethnodrama, Saldana suggests making attempts to present a three-dimensional nature of the participant. He recommends that:

Portrayal of a participant in ethnodrama [should be]: (a) from interviews: what the participant reveals about his or her perceptions or constructed meanings; (b) from field notes, journal entries, or other written artifacts: what the researcher observes, infers, and interprets from the participant in action; (c) from observations or interviews with other participants connected to the primary case study: perspectives about the primary participant or phenomena; and (d) from research literature: what other scholars offer about the phenomena under investigation. (Saldana, 2003, p. 223)

Following Saldana's suggestions, I incorporated information about the participants from photo- and object-elicitation conversations, conversational interviews, researcher-written data, and fieldnotes. This incorporation added to a multidimensionality of data which went well beyond the textual re-presentation of data.

Saldana also recommends using monologues as an effective way to dramatize the data. He explains:

Monologues are extended passages of text spoken by one character that are (a) addressed to another character listening on stage, (b) addressed directly to the audience, or (c)

reveal inner thoughts spoken aloud—a soliloquy—for the audience (see Prendergast, 2001). A playwright in ethnodrama is not just a storyteller, he or she is a story-reteller. You don't compose what your participants tell you in interviews, but you can creatively and strategically edit the transcripts, assuming you wish to maintain rather than “restory” their narratives. Interviews with one participant generate transcript data suitable for transformation into one-person reflections. (Saldana, 2003, p. 224)

This suggestion became especially helpful for me as I was able to incorporate and manipulate multiple excerpts for dramatic effect as monologues to develop both Yamini's and Neerada's characters. Because I had abundant conversational data, I had access to various forms of reflective data and strategically incorporated them in the plays.

Next I looked at Saldana's recommendations for scenography to add multidimensionality to re-presentation. He suggests:

“[B]ecause ethnography analyzes participants in action, there are things to show on stage: descriptive replication with subtextual inferences of the way participants facially react, walk, gesture, pose, dress, vocally inflect, and interact with others. These nonverbal cues reveal much about characters—and real people. Scenography establishes time and place of a play, evokes mood, and serves the required action of characters. This article cannot discuss in depth the potential of costumes (participant clothing), hand properties (artifacts), or scenery, lighting, and sound (the fieldwork environment) to enhance the ethnographic performance. But from my own experience, I offer the classic design adage for guidance: “Less is more.” (Saldana, p. 2003, p. 227)

I used my fieldnotes to construct the scenography and remembered that “less is more” in terms of performance and re-enactments. Included in the scenography were descriptions of chairs

in formal academic offices to establish the subtext of power relations between the participant and the professor. I also included gestures, body language, and other non-verbal aspects (i.e., rolling eyes for Yamini) when developing a scene. All scenes were marked with time and relations to another scene that served either as a front or back stage for the current scene.

Armed with a compatibility with performance ethnography I began to examine the front and back stage figuration closely. These front and back stages could become the spaces where the participants experience certain events, topics, and epiphanies. Sometimes these spaces were physical (i.e., a classroom) and sometimes they were imagined (i.e., memories of India) or temporal. Realizing that the front and back stages each have separate audiences (see Figure 4) and that each audience is privy to different kinds of performances, I began to develop the idea of front and back stage further, concluding that front and back stages are relational terms and are

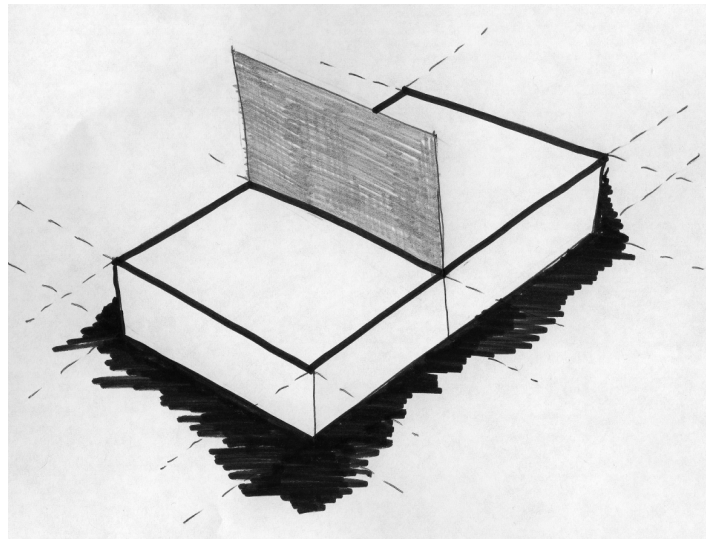


Figure 4: Front and back stage

not fixed in their performative spaces. This means that what is back stage for one audience could be front stage for another audience who is observing performances at the back stage.

The general argument is that there is always a performative aspect to our acts and actions and depending on who the audience is, these acts and actions vary. Front and back stage are

useful constructs in relation to each other, but they do not hold on to their absoluteness for too long. One can move within multiple back and front stages depending on one's acts of accommodation, resistance, and reworking of multiple subject positions and spaces. These front and back stages can become a labyrinthine structure through which the participants navigate in their everyday lives (see Figure 5).

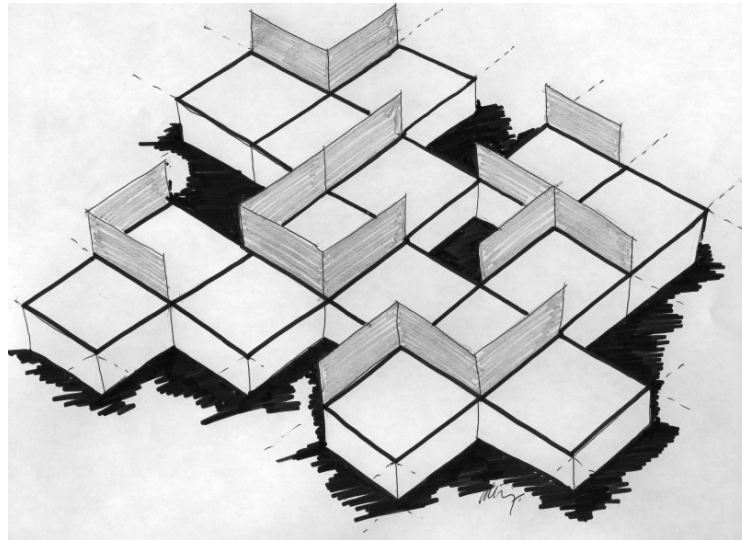


Figure 5: Labyrinth of front and back stages

The performative self is full of contradictions, inconsistencies, tensions, voices, and silences. The front and back stage allegories show multiple forms of shifts, border crossings, and negotiations between spaces – shifting spaces of lived experiences. Therefore, for this study, the front stage became where the participant chose to perform in one way and the back stage became a space in relation to the front stage where the tensions, contradictions, elaborations, and giving voice to silences were addressed. The labyrinthine depiction of front and back stages allows for participants' existence and movement in multiple spaces, and reveals how acts of border crossing are informed by competing and contradictory discourses.

Since at any given time any stage could be a front or back stage performance for a specific audience, every stage has a front and back stage component to it. The stages for this

research denote the regions or spaces in which participants' lived experiences are produced.

Using a visual representation to demonstrate the front and back stage performances separately for each performance allowed me to show specific negotiations and relations. Incorporating the fieldnotes and pictures into the stage as settings and as the backdrop enabled me to create a multidimensional representation of the data.

To select appropriate performances that would be the "nuggets" of the representation, I chose those performances based on either the intensity with which the participant described events and/or events that the participants repeated over multiple times and spaces. Once the spaces were identified, attending to the research questions for both participants provided further understanding of negotiations, relations, tensions, and contradictions. Consequently, the performative acts in each of the spaces soon began to appear in relation to other spaces. Thus, if the participants identified the relationships directly, then I placed the performative act(s) as front and back stage plays, demonstrating the different ways participants negotiated an experience in those spaces. If a relationship was researcher-identified, then I clarified such relationships through further member checks and peer debriefing before situating the plays in front and back stage relations to one another.

After the front and back stage plays were constructed, the need to crystallize the main arguments became the driving force for designing the plays. The plays were named from those arguments. During the entire time, there were periodic member checks and peer debriefing for enhanced focusing and sharpening of ideas. The plays presented are those with which the participants were most comfortable, narratives they agreed with and for which they understood my intentions. This is not to imply that the participants did not disagree with my interpretations.

Instead, we talked through the disagreements while I continued to emphasize that they had the final say over what got produced about their lived experiences.

Once I interpreted the participants' disagreements to their satisfaction and made the necessary changes, I would put forth that representation as findings. The staged interpretation was always a co-construction that honored the participants' interpretations. The subsequent discussion space served as a site for my subjectivities and interpretations as depicted in Chapters 4 and 5. For example, Neerada disagreed about an experience that I interpreted as gendered and racialized. However, since this was the first time Neerada was experiencing racialization, she did not perceive the incident to be racializing or gendering her as an Other. I mention this discrepancy in the discussion so that the reader can situate her/himself within the overlapping subject position. Finally when all the plays were constructed, I created visual diagrams demonstrating the relationships between each act of the plays for clarity and organization. This construction process was iterative as I continued to think through the plays and returned to my initial data analysis questions about silences, tensions, and contradictions.

Another iterative strategy that enhanced the sharpness of the plays included consideration of the following questions: Where do the plays get the participants and where do they get me? Why is there a need to occupy such subject positions and what are the possibilities and pitfalls generated through these occupations? The final draft of the plays was produced through extensive writing around these questions to identify nuggets.

Chapter Summary

This chapter is grounded in various de/colonizing approaches informing research design, data collection, analysis, and re-presentation. By attempting to abandon a will to know; identifying a continuum between silence and voice; highlighting the need for multiple forms of

border-crossings by breaking the oppressor/oppressed binaries; and incorporating various methods of data collection, analysis, and representation, this study captures multiple ways of producing knowledge. While the voices of the participants were always already mitigated through several mitigating filters, I tried to honor these voices as much as possible. The participants' interests and continued participation became integral parts of this study, ensuring collaborative construction of knowledge and authoring even though I continued to monitor and facilitate the direction of the study.

Such a collaborative research process, along with de/colonizing departures, member checks, peer debriefing, and shuttling between interrogative and reflective posturing added to the rigor and trustworthiness of this research. Since this study began with the intent to implement de/colonizing epistemologies, the approaches taken were consistently informed by theoretical and methodological frameworks of such epistemologies, allowing varied forms of data analysis and re-presentation.

My transnational subjectivities remained under and outside an autoethnographic gaze through writing, member checks, peer debriefing, constructing critical personal narratives, and a relentless desire to blur boundaries and binaries anywhere I saw them. In the next two chapters, Neerada's and Yamini's negotiations are presented in multiple spaces.

CHAPTER 4: *MIRCH MASALA*, SHUTTTLING BETWEEN THE FAMILIAR AND THE UNFAMILIAR

This chapter reflects the production of Neerada's experiences as she moves between familiar and unfamiliar contexts through physical, temporal, and imagined spaces. The first part of the chapter presents the excerpt in which Neerada authored the title of the chapter. The second part includes Neerada's description of moving in and out of her experiences in India and the U.S. The chapter concludes with a series of front and back stage plays occurring and overlapping in multiple spaces and periods. Prior to presenting the plays, I offer a timeline of events with a list of the plays and the spaces marked by front and back stages.

Mirch and Masala and the Constant Moving and Being In Between

The following excerpt describes Neerada's understanding of her experiences of being an international Indian student in the U.S. During the course of the research, Neerada mentioned several times that she felt like a performer. We began a conversation in which she started to name the performances that reflected her transnational existence at the complex intersection of race, class, caste, nationality, religion, and gender.

Neerada: I think that I continue to perform, and perform differently for different people depending on where it is that I have to perform. Sometimes it feels like the other person is more in control of me and then there are times where I feel that I have a lot of ways to write and develop my character.

Kakali: Can you think of some examples?³⁴

³⁴ While the interaction was more conversational, I re-present only a reduced and edited version to focus on research as product rather than process for this chapter. My editing decisions were mostly informed by the poignancy of the points that I wanted to make in each act. I find value in identifying process-oriented findings to better inform the construction of knowledge; however, in order to remain within the scope of this dissertation, I chose to emphasize

Neerada: When I am at school with the professors, I think they have a lot of control over me. But when I fight with my father asking him for something, I think I had more control of that performance because I was more comfortable speaking my mind than I am with professors. But overall, I think it depends on the kind of relationship I have with people that determines how much of my own flavor I can add into the performance. Maybe you can make movie out of my life? (inflection in voice)

Kakali: What kind of movie do you think you can make from your life?

Neerada: Something that emphasizes what it is like to live in an urban lifestyle between being traditional and being modern. Like they showed in *Hum Tum*³⁵. I liked the movie because it did not show the girl to be extremely traditional *Bharatiya nari*³⁶, or too modern that she appears like a call girl. Most of us are somewhere in between and we have to figure out how to balance our Eastern and Western values.

Kakali: What do you think are Eastern and Western values?

Neerada: Well, Eastern is so much of tradition; you know, *pujas*, festivals, clothes, and respecting your elders, and being interested in domestic stuff [like] cooking and all. But then Western is about just freaking out, like wearing jeans, drinking, listening to Western

the product more than the process. Nevertheless, I have focused on some procedural negotiations in Chapter Three and also in Chapter Seven in my discussion of methodological implications.

³⁵ A Hindi movie released in 2004 in Bollywood that was loosely based on *When Harry Met Sally* and converted to suit Indian sensibilities. The movie was a “superhit” (a term used for an unprecedented box office success) in India and abroad, and for the first time in a Hindi movie, a man and a woman slept together and the woman didn’t feel that they needed to get married because they had slept together. The man proposed to the woman, stating that he would like to get married since they had had sex. The woman asserted that if the man thought it had been a mistake, she did not want to pay for one night’s mistake with a whole lifetime of marriage, as she did not believe that marriage was the ultimate goal of a woman’s life. This dialogue was revolutionary because it was the first time a lead actress commanded respect for her position even when it went against traditional norms of remaining a virgin until marriage.

³⁶ The literal meaning of the term *Bharatiya Nari* is “a traditional Indian woman.” From various movies and other political, historical, and mythical discourses, I understand *Bharatiya Nari* as a feminine archetype that fixes the Indian woman in religious and historical discourses as the site of such feminine virtues as chastity, integrity, tolerance, forgiveness, and an existence that is unconditionally giving towards her family members, community, and nation.

music, watching Western movies, but then again you know depending on where you are in India some of this stuff is seen as normal and not a big deal, like if you are in the metros³⁷. I [used to] do all of this Western stuff and it was not a big deal in Mumbai . . . And that's why [I] really liked *Hum Tum* because Rani Mukherjee was like us, a normal girl, influenced by both Eastern and Western values. In many ways I think my life is like a Bollywood movie.

Kakali: How fun it would be to have your own movie. What would you call it?

Neerada: I would call it *Mirch Masala*. See *Mirch* means chili and *Masala* means spices. Now if you were to just eat the chili then you will have a really unpleasant lingering taste in your mouth that will take a long time to get over. But then the *masalas* indicate a world of spices, pleasant and familiar flavors. I see the *mirch* as the shock of a taste, an unexpected thing, something that shocks, sometimes hurts and causes you pain. Then the *masala* is something that takes you back to what is home, the familiar aroma that comes from my mama's kitchen. By being in the U.S. I had to adjust to many types of unfamiliar and familiar things. And things change, where some things appeared familiar at first and soon changed to being unfamiliar and also the other way around. So I feel like I am continuously discovering known and unknown ways of moving between or staying in the middle of the *mirch* and the *masala*. I think it would be fun to call my movie *Mirch Masala*.



³⁷ *Metros* refers to metropolitan cities in India such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, etc.

Neerada – A Self Portrait



I like to think that I am a simple girl from India, but when I really think about it, I think I am blessed with many things that other people don't have in their lifetimes. First, my father works in a high position in the Indian government. Mumbai³⁸ is in the palm of his hands. For that reason alone our family has a lot of social visibility and status. My father provided us with an affluent upper-middle class lifestyle but he taught us that wealth, power, and status are all transient. My mother encouraged me to have friends from multiple classes like low class, low-middle class, because she said that I should not take things for granted. In Mumbai, it is pretty common to see high rises and slums together and we had a slum next door to us. My father

³⁸ One of largest metropolitan cities in India, previously known as Bombay.

insisted that we treat the people in the slum with respect and dignity. Eventually, I became friends with the kids in the slum. Maybe that is when I learned to see the extraordinary in the ordinary and began to take a lot of pictures of everything around me. I guess in many ways I think that the pictures I take are an extension of me and my thoughts. I guess it feels right when I take my camera and take that one picture that no one thought was special and then when people think the picture is special, I feel that I have communicated in a way that goes beyond words.



I am lucky that I had a family that encouraged me in my hobbies and tried to teach me to be independent before I came to U.S.A. My father helped me get a part-time job and at one point I stayed on my own in Thane, Mumbai, which is pretty rare for an Indian girl.

My family consists of two sisters and my parents. I am the middle sister. But the most important members of my family are my three dogs, Papa, Komdi, and Manch, with whom I am the closest amongst all my family members.



We come from a high caste family, which means that my family is Marathi Brahmin. You cannot get any higher than that in terms of caste. This meant that we would have *puja*³⁹ in our house where we could perform our own offerings without needing a priest. My father usually performed all the rituals. Even if my father did not, since we were Hindus, and Hinduism is the most popular religion in India, I had lots of options to practice my religion during weekly, monthly, and national religious festivals. For a long time, we had a right-wing Hindu nationalist party in government. So I was sure that my religious interests were always represented no matter what, unlike other religions like Islam, Sikhism, or Christianity⁴⁰.

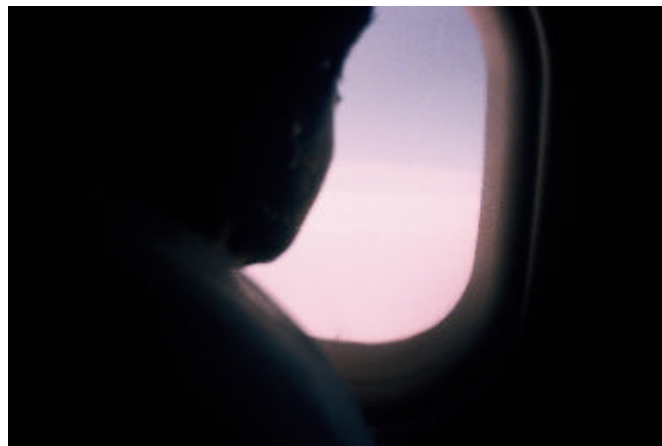
Education is valued highly in our family. My father is a proud Indian man and doesn't think that Indians should go abroad for studies or careers when their country could benefit so much from them. So he always encouraged us in our studies and wanted us to go into lucrative and prestigious careers in India. That's why when I told my parents I wanted to study veterinary medicine, they refused, telling me that girls are not supposed to work with horses and cows. There is no prestige or status in those kinds of jobs. I did everything in my power so that my parents would let me study vet medicine. I volunteered at a local veterinary clinic and got the

³⁹ Worship rituals

⁴⁰ Neerada's position is one of privilege, representing the powerful elite in India in terms of class, caste, social visibility, and religion.

doctor to talk to my father supporting my decision. Without telling my father, I withdrew my college admission for commerce and started all over again, taking a few lower standard classes to have my prerequisites for vet medicine. Finally, after graduating from my program, I wanted to come to the U.S., much to my father's dissatisfaction. Unfortunately, I did not prepare my paperwork correctly the first two times and got rejected. My father was upset with me, did not understand my need to come to the U.S. and told me that I am to sponsor my own trip if I want to go to the U.S. from that point onwards.

I worked part time, tutored people at home, did some computer consulting, and saved the money, as I learned to apply [for a visa] the correct way. I was excited about coming to the U.S. because India did not have any specialized programs in vet medicine and the University of Arborville, where I got accepted, was one of the best universities for the program of my choice. I felt so lucky that I could do something that I loved.



My experiences after coming to the U.S. caught me off guard in many ways. Living in a metro in India, America wasn't any major culture shock, because we are pretty Westernized in Mumbai. However, I soon realized that I don't enjoy the same kind of privileges that I once did in India. My caste, religion, social visibility, class status were all immediately erased when I arrived to the U.S. I was greeted by a member of the Indian Students' Association, Ganesh, who

took me to an off-campus apartment complex close to the University called Hickory Towers, where mostly Indian students and some *Amrus*⁴¹ and *ABCDs*⁴² lived. I was to share a room with another new Indian girl and [we shared the apartment] with a senior student, who got her own room with an attached bathroom. The townhouse that would become my home for the next one year was worn out with stains on the carpet, broken appliances, and cockroaches running all over the place. I asked Ganesh if I could be reassigned, and he said that there are no other units and I should just learn to adjust to my surroundings.

At first it felt good to be around Indians in my Hickory Towers community. Although we had a good orientation from the International Student Life telling us how to move around in town and other details for our everyday living, knowing that I had a community of seniors who I could go to if I needed any help was reassuring. I soon realized that apart from going to school and coming back home on the school or the city bus, my mobility was limited if I had to go somewhere else. I asked my community seniors to help me. They were helpful in the beginning, but then I realized that the community was more like a closed-minded Indian village that did not allow people their private spaces – a feeling that I wasn't used to dealing with when I was in India. People in the community wanted to know everything that was going on with my life even when I did not want to volunteer information. Gradually I distanced myself from them and they stopped helping me. I found other ways to help myself.

⁴¹ Americans (usually Neerada used the term *Amrus* to mean White Americans; when she talked about other Americans, she mentioned them with a hyphenated identity like African-American, Hispanic-American, etc.). This is a common term used among the Indians in Hickory Towers as a quick reference to White Americans in a non-derogative way.

⁴² American-Born Confused Desis (ABCD) – A term used by Indian-born residents in the U.S. to identify people of Indian origin who were born in U.S. The term “confused desis” conveys the general feeling among Indian-born people in the U.S. that those of Indian descent born in the U.S. are in a confused state of mind because they don't know how to identify with their cultural heritage and they are not fully accepted by the dominant White culture. Due to the strong influence of the culture of U.S. on American-born people of Indian descent, there is often a perception that these people are confused about their social and national identities.

Academically, I had a tough semester. Because I came into a specialized program I did not have the training required for some of the courses. I had to take some graduate level classes in unfamiliar areas which demanded a lot of time and attention. This cost me my relationship with my boyfriend who complained that because I was not available to him, he had to move on with someone else. It was a big loss because he was a huge support system for me or so I thought, so I felt overwhelmed trying to balance academia, relationship, and surviving in a foreign land. I am still proud of what I have accomplished, and since I had to fight so much to get here, I know that I don't want to mess up my education.

But overall in my first six months of being in the U.S., I was struggling to fit in my academic and living communities. My only solace through those times was my photography and the few friends I had scattered around the world with whom I chatted over instant messages. Those were the only times I felt that I belonged. I have been lonely even when I tried to keep busy with studies. Toward the end of my first semester Kakali introduced me to some other female Indians who didn't live in Hickory Towers, but in on-campus graduate student apartments. I found these girls to be more of my type and I made friends with them easily. Now, almost a year into the U.S., I am good friends with them [and] consider them to be my extended family in the U.S., the same way I consider my friends from India.



Experiencing the *Mirch* and the *Masala*: Neerada's Negotiations in Multiple Spaces

The following plays demonstrate Neerada's interactions and negotiations in multiple physical, temporal, and imagined spaces, producing her transnational experiences in the context of higher education in the U.S. These plays could be performed simultaneously, akin to Olympic gymnastics or track and field competitions where the audience has a choice of watching any of

the simultaneously occurring multiple events with adequate sound barriers as partitions.

Otherwise, for a more organized feel, these plays could be performed sequentially as depicted in this chapter. The plays are organized in relation to events and Neerada's understandings and negotiations of those events. These understandings and negotiations are portrayed in front and back stage acts, which can stand alone as individual plays but always exist in relation to events happening in the spaces depicted in the front and back stages.

To demonstrate Neerada's negotiations and understanding of her experiences, six pairs of stages are set for the simultaneously or sequentially occurring performances. These stages represent Neerada's negotiations in formal and informal academic spaces, living communities, and Indian religious and cultural communities in the U.S. while she was influenced by her upbringing in and memories of India. The following table represents the list of plays separated temporally and/or spatially to provide the reader with an overview.

Play	Front Stage	Back Stage
Me, an international student: What are my rights? I AM a Student!	Formal academia	<i>Adda</i> space with Kakali
What kind of an Indian/Asian are you?	Informal academia	Informal academia
A divided department	Informal academia (time based)	Hickory Towers
Mini India - Familiar but modified	Informal academia (time based)	Informal academia (time based)
Wor-shipping religion, culture	Hickory Towers	Alternate communities
	Non Resident Indian in the U.S.	Indian in the U.S.

Table 2: List of Front and Back Stage Plays

While front and back stages are relational and shifting, for the purpose of reading convenience, I mark front and back stages in the following plays. In the event of a real performance, stages could be separated with tall, thick, sound-blocking partitions in between and audience members would have the flexibility to choose whichever side of the partition they wanted to be in to view the performances. Otherwise, sequential plays could be presented with a revolving stage to denote front and back stage performances. In the lives of both Neerada and Yamini, flights to and from these stages are instantaneous and simultaneous. Neerada could be in one space physically while accessing another space mentally. The program introduction brochure

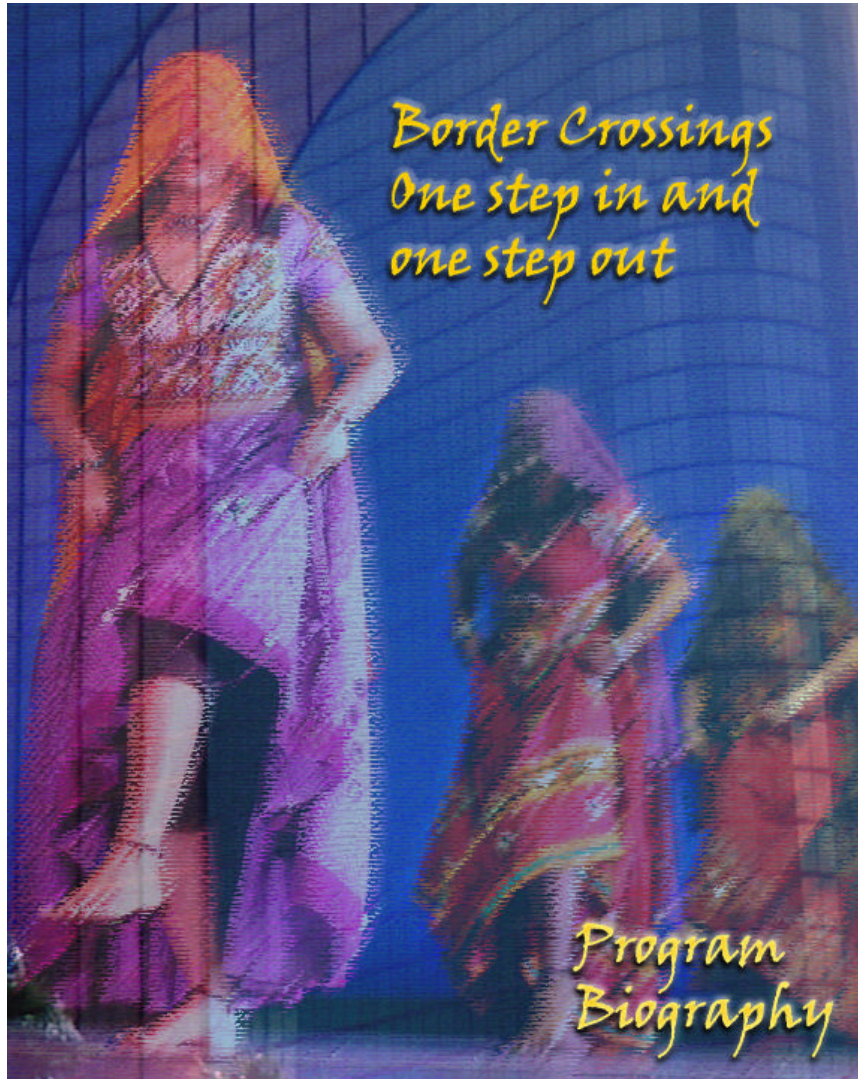
included in this chapter presents a simultaneous performance but can be modified easily to present a sequential performance.

Event	Time
Formal Academia Initial rejection of advisor – Would not give permission to go to India during summer 2005 Discussion of options with Kakali Permission to go to India for two weeks in May 2005 Discussion of awareness and acceptance of exploitation with Kakali	Late September 2004 Early October 2004 Mid January 2005 Late January 2005
Formal Academia Disrespectful treatment by a professor teaching biotechnology Discussion with White female classmate about professor Biotechnology professor laughing at students' answers on final exam Neerada resisting through glaring eye contact	Late August 2004 Late October 2004 Mid December 2004 Mid December 2004 (same time)
Informal Academia Secretary asking her to fill out form by checking "Other" for race White female peers' questions about India being exotic and backwards Chinese colleague informing Neerada about department's racial divide Neerada's invitation to the department for a potluck at her home	Late August 2004 Early September 2004 Early September 2004 Mid January 2005
Hickory Towers Neerada gaining access to multiple resources (Internet, mobility) Neerada understanding expectations about her role in the community Neerada's discussion with father about access to resources Neerada signing new lease in on-campus graduate apartments	July 2004-October 2004 Mid September 2004 Late September 2004 Mid February 2005

Neerada buying an used car	Mid March 2005
Neerada distancing herself from Hickory Towers and finding a new community of non-resident Indians	Mid November 2004 – April 2005
Cultural and Religious Celebrations (Space – multiple)	
Call from India during a religious festival	Late October 2004
Delayed celebration of festivals in the U.S. during weekends	Ongoing (late November 2004 – April 2005)
Personally performing religious rituals on the day of the festival	Ongoing (October – April 2005)
Participating in improvised celebrations of religious festivals by Indian community in family and graduate student housing	January 2005-April 2005
Dialoguing with Kakali about celebrating religious and cultural festivals	Ongoing (August 2004 – March 2005)

Table 3: Timeline of Events – Neerada’s Negotiations

Program Introduction: The Plays



Program Biography

Welcome to an evening of Border Crossings where you are encouraged to view every act with both acceptance and suspicion. The actors portray characters that maintain and cross many borders in their lives - all of which are partially true and partially fictional.

As you enter, you will see several front and back stages set up for your viewing. Throughout the evening, there will be simultaneous plays performed in all of the stages. You have stage passes to all of the plays and can migrate around as you please.

These are stories of two female Indian graduate students pursuing their studies in a south eastern state University in the U.S. The stories depict the first six to eight months of their stay in the U.S.

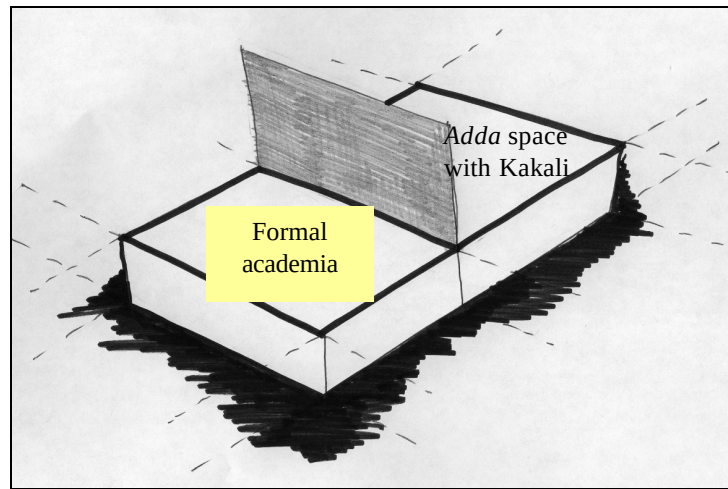
The protagonist, Neerada requests that you experience her stories not only based on what is told but also based on the untold, the silences.

Tonight's emcee will be around after initial introductions for further elaboration after the plays are concluded.



Formal academia (Front stage)

Me, an international student: What are my rights?



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late September)

*Scenography*⁴³: Neerada is in her advisor's (Dr. Riley's) office. Dr. Riley, an African professor from Kenya in his 50s, speaks with a British accent. Neerada mentioned that when she talked to him on the phone before coming to the U.S. she could not tell that he was Black.

Dr. Riley's office contains a huge desk and a tall chair for him and couch-like chairs for visitors who, when seated, sink into the chairs.

Neerada: Dr. Riley, may I please go to India next summer to visit my family? I am very homesick and lonely.

Dr. Riley: What India? I don't think you can afford to go to India. Hmm. We have a situation here. I have planned for you to take some courses, then you have your research, and then you have to work on projects in the lab. So how can you go really?

Neerada: Then it would be more than a year before I would get to see my family.

⁴³ The scenography describing the context of the acts are Neerada's words from the transcripts represented in *italicized* form. Any additional insertion from field notes or personal reflection is represented in non-italicized form.

Dr. Riley: I prefer that you concentrate on your program and your studies. These are some of the sacrifices you have to make for your studies. Summer is too long of a time for me to let you go to India.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Mid January)

Scenography: Neerada is crying in the hallway of an academic building. Dr. Riley, her professor, walks by and sees her crying. He stops to talk to Neerada.

Dr. Riley: Neerada, what's wrong?

Neerada: (wiping tears) Nothing, sir.

Dr. Riley: Come into my office.

(Both of them walk off the stage. The stage darkens. Dr. Riley's office becomes the new set when the lights come up again.)

Dr. Riley: Okay, so what is the matter?

Neerada: Well, sir, I just had a rough breakup with my boyfriend and I don't have a lot of people with whom I can talk and I really miss my family (begins to cry).

Dr. Riley: You have come here to study and you have to focus on that. Be strong. Boys will come and go; you cannot get involved so much in that. I have a problem letting you go to India for summer. See, even as a professor I get four weeks of holidays, and you get two weeks over the winter. So you can go home then.

Neerada: But sir, that would be more than a year, and I didn't really want to go in the winter. I wanted to go sooner if I could.

Dr. Riley: I guess technically you can go home for 14 days, so you can go in the intersession before the summer sessions start.

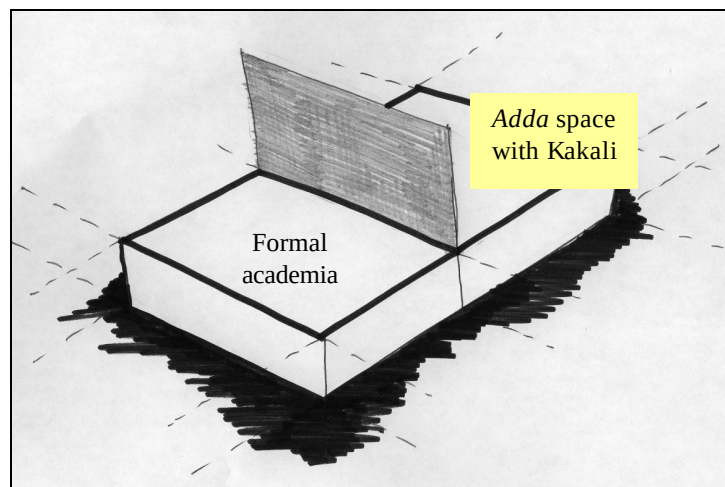
Neerada: 2 weeks? The airfare is \$1300; it's too expensive for two weeks, especially if there is any delay and I miss a connecting flight.

Dr. Riley: That's all the time I can allow you to take off. You decide what is right for you.



Adda with Kakali (Backstage to Formal Academia)

Me, an international student: What are my rights?



Scenography: Kakali and Neerada in a coffee shop.

Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Early October, 2004)

Neerada: Kakali, I am not sure what my rights are as an international student, but my advisor won't let me go to India next summer. I am very homesick and lonely.

Kakali: Well, how long is your assistantship? Nine or 12 months?

Neerada: On my letter it said nine months but in brackets it said [it] can be extended to 12 months. But I don't know if they have extended it. Since my assistantship and research work involve working on the same project, I am not sure what to do. I can't tell when I am working on

my research if it is part of my assistantship or if there is an unsaid expectation to put in extra hours since it is your research. I end up putting in a lot of hours in my research. But if it is not assistantship then do I have to be in Arborville in summer?

Kakali: Well if you have a 9-month assistantship then you are not obligated to be around [in the] summer. Can you ask the department secretary or your advisor what the terms of your contract mean or if they extended it to 12 months?

Neerada: No, probably not. Because even if it is nine months, I really cannot say that I have the right to go home. It would be very awkward and difficult. I really don't want to develop a bad relationship with my advisor. I don't even know how to talk about this stuff really with anyone in my department.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Late January 2005)

Scenography: Neerada and Kakali are in a coffee shop.

Neerada: Guess what? My advisor said that I can go to India!

Kakali: That is wonderful. How did it happen? Why did he change his mind?

Neerada: I was upset about my breakup with my boyfriend Ashit. He saw me cry. Then he took me to his office and gave me a nice fatherly lecture. Told me to be strong. He was strict but I understand that he wants me to be a focused student and not worry about boys. Then he said that I could go to India for two weeks in May. I tried to tell him that two weeks is too short for the airfare. But he did not give me any more options and said technically that's all that I am allowed to go.

Kakali: Do you feel that you got what you wanted?

Neerada: No, I did not get what I wanted. But something is better than nothing. One of the seniors in my department, Gina, she is from Kenya, tells me that Dr. Riley is strict and pushes his students really hard, and may be that's why he did not want me to go for a long time.

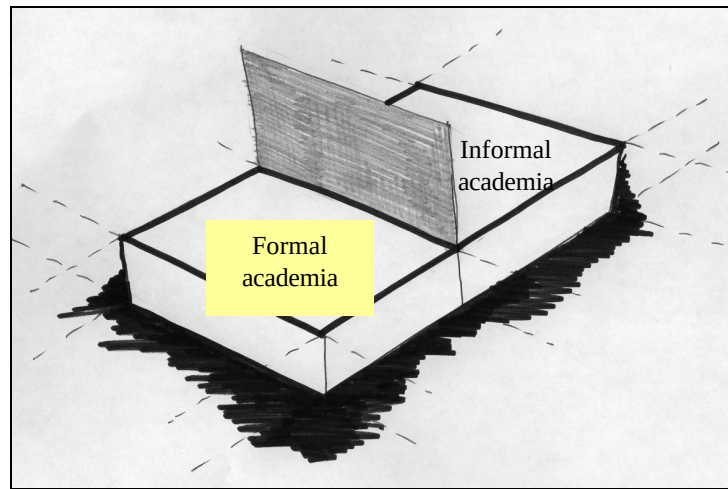
Kakali: But do you know if you will get paid to work on your research for your advisor in the lab over the summer?

Neerada: No, I don't and I really cannot ask anyone because even if I find out that I am not getting paid, I don't know how to talk about these issues without creating trouble or a bad impression on me. So there is a risk of me getting exploited, but the other risk of developing a bad impression is too high. To be honest with you, I don't even want to think of that possibility because it would make me more upset. I know he has a lot of power over me, but I prefer to think that he is doing everything for my good, looking out for my best interests. So even though it seems strict, I have to believe that he means well.



Formal Academia (Front Stage)

I AM a student!



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late August 2004)

Scenography: Neerada is in the office of a *White professor in his early 30s. His office contains a tall chair for the professor and a relatively shorter chair for the visitor.*

Neerada: Dr. Baxter, I have been struggling with the readings in biotechnology from our text. The British author of the text writes very densely and I don't understand all of it. Could you please recommend another book?

Dr. Baxter: What seems to be the problem? It is written in English. Don't you know English, see, A, B, C, D (recites the English alphabet with a mocking tone).

Neerada (appears stunned, gulps): Yes I do, but I cannot understand the text. Actually I did not have to take this course in India so this is my first time with this material. Can I read something in addition to the text?

Dr. Baxter (reaches to his bookshelf and pulls down a book): Try this one. It is a basic level book that can bring you up to speed with the rest of us.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Mid December 2004)

Scenography: An examination hall with students taking their written exams. Two invigilators, including Dr. Baxter, are present. Dr. Baxter laughs at students' responses to a question as they hand in their papers. The second invigilator does not laugh.

Neerada (inner speech – delivering to the audience): I am not sure about the male cloning question, because we only learned about female cloning. Better figure it out because Baxter would laugh at you if you are wrong. I cannot believe he is laughing. How irritating!

Students are leaving the exam hall and shaking hands with Dr. Baxter and thanking him for a good course. Baxter looks at a response and laughs louder than before. Neerada looks up and maintains a glaring eye contact for 30 seconds.

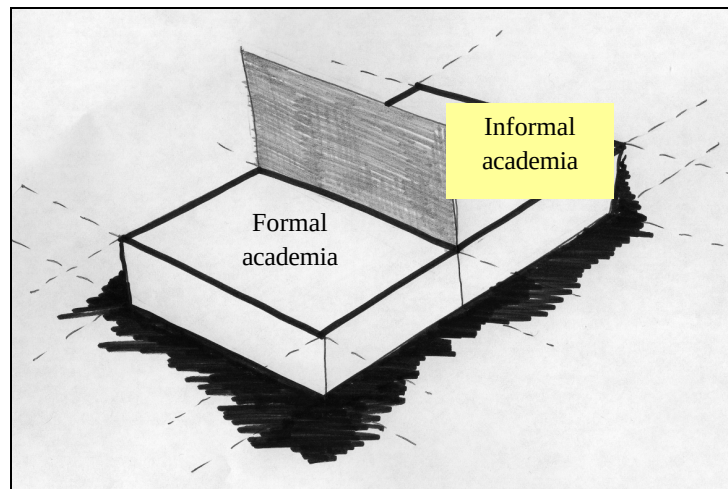
Neerada (inner speech – delivering to the audience): I am not going to tell him that this was a good course like the other students did. *(Neerada hands over her paper, shakes hands with Dr. Baxter.)*

Neerada: Thank you, Dr. Baxter. I enjoyed the course.



Informal Academia (Back stage to Formal Academia)

I AM a student!



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late October 2004)

Scenography: Neerada and a White female student in her mid-twenties at a coffee shop.

Neerada: Patti, what do you think of Dr. Baxter?

Patti: I suppose he is okay. He expects a lot from his students.

Neerada: I went to his office during his office hours telling him that I did not understand some things in the text, and he said that don't you know English and began to recite the alphabet!

Patti: Oh my God! I cannot believe he talked to you like that. I just haven't been to his office hours but normally when he talks to me after class or something, he has never been that rude. I hope you had better experiences with other professors.

Neerada: Well, yeah, the other professors are mostly polite. Some of them compliment me on my English speaking skills and the others don't really seem to know me. But Dr. Baxter seems to always say things that make me feel bad. And the subject is hard for me because it is a specialized subject and I don't have the kind of undergraduate training expected for this class. So I am learning a lot of things for the first time.

Patti: I suppose if Baxter is that rude then you really cannot address how you feel with him.

Listen, we can study together if you like. I have taken these courses in my undergrad.

Neerada: Oh, that would be great. Thanks so much.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Mid December 2004)

Scenography: Neerada delivering a monologue.

Even in India, professors don't laugh at students openly.

I stared at him hard for a long time, make him understand

I did NOT like his behavior. After all we ARE students.

We WILL make mistakes and learn. Does he have the right to laugh?

I wanted to run away after handing in my paper.

Not tell him thanks for the class

I imagined him being rude again, I imagined crying again

I couldn't do it. I told him thanks for the class.

My paper was in his hands.

(Pauses for a minute.)

Other professors are kind, strict, and polite

They want you to do well in your studies

Similar and different from Indian professors

How do you talk to professors?

How do you know if they will be flexible?

I don't know how to be a good student

I am an "international" before I am a student

I feel like I don't belong.

The subtle gestures, body language, tone of voice

Conversations where I am barely there

Talks of culture, a cultural specimen

Intruding, invading, don't know my place

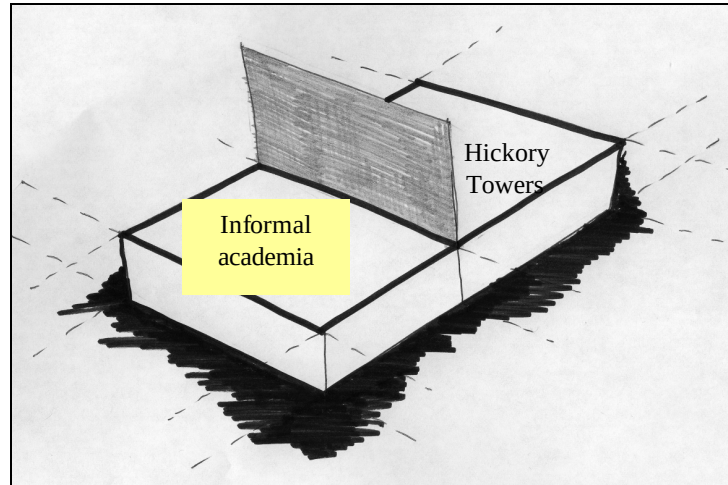
In U.S., I haven't made many friends yet

How can I be a good "international" student?



Informal Academia (Front Stage)

What kind of Asian/Indian are you?



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late August 2004)

Scenography: Neerada is completing paperwork in a secretary's office in a University setting in the U.S. The secretary is a White female, a heavyset woman in her late 40s or early 50s with blonde hair, and speaks with an accent that Neerada doesn't understand very well at times.

Neerada: There you go Mary, all complete.

Mary (looking at the completed form): Honey, this ain't right. You checked off Asian for your race. You need to check off Other.

Neerada: But I am Asian. India is in Asia!

Mary: That I don't know but as far as the form goes, only people from China, Japan, you know like those countries, can say they are Asians.

Neerada takes the form and corrects it accordingly.

Mary: Thanks, honey. I am sorry about this. Say, the clothes you wearing--they look very trendy.

Which mall did you go to? Are they from Old Navy?

Neerada: No, I got them from India.

Mary: They have trendy clothes like this in India?

Neerada: Oh yeah, and most of the fashion labels here like Liz Claiborne, Gap, Tommy Hilfiger, they all have clothes made in India.

Mary: Really? I did not know that.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Early September 2004)

Scenography: Neerada runs into three White female students in their mid- to late twenties in the hallway of a university building.

Jennifer: Hi Neerada, how do you like the U.S.?

Neerada: I like it.

Melanie: Will you go back home after you are done?

Neerada: I haven't thought that far yet.

Melanie: Hey, I heard that in your country marriages are arranged. Are you going to get an arranged marriage?

Neerada: I have a boyfriend but if I did not, maybe.

Jennifer: How interesting! Good for you.

Carla: You speak such good English. You and Dr. Riley sound very similar. You have the same sweet accent. How did you learn such good English?

Neerada: Well most people in India, especially in middle- and upper-middle class know English. We study in English. Often I think in English.

Carla: That's great! I did not know that. My dad jokes and says that sometimes it's embarrassing when foreigners come and can speak English better than us.

Jennifer: Well, it was good seeing you. We need to go for a dinner. Some of us from the department are getting together. Hey, maybe we should invite you next time when we get together?

Neerada: That would be nice, thank you.

Melanie: Can you cook Indian food?

Neerada: Yes, I can.

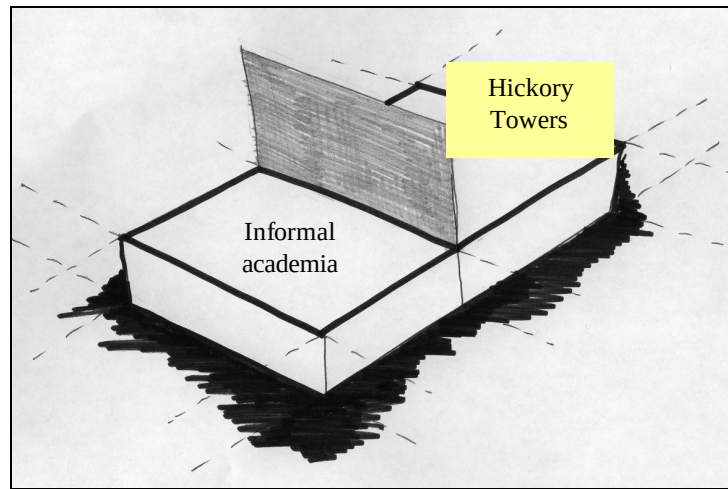
Jennifer: Mmm. I love curry. Great, then we must invite you for next time. We have to go. Bye.

Neerada: Bye.



Hickory Towers (Backstage to Informal Academia)

What kind of an Indian/Asian are you?



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late August, 2004)

Scenography: On the back screen the picture below of people having picnic on the sidewalk is projected. Amongst the people present some are newcomers and some are seniors who have been in the U.S. for at least two years or more. All of them are Indians in their mid- to late twenties.



Abhishek: This is much better than eating inside those dirty, dingy apartments.

Geeta: Reminds me of my college days in India.

Neerada: College was so much fun! I think my social life was busier than my academic life (laughs).

Flash pictures in the background of Neerada's college life.





(Neerada notices that Kanchan looks at her chest first before starting his sentence. She begins to feel a bit uncomfortable.)

Kanchan: Over here, you are not as carefree Neerada, you have to take care of everything. But don't worry, the seniors are here to help you.

Geeta: Yeah Neerada, I had a lot of help from the seniors when I got here. Hickory Towers is a great place to be for a new Indian student because you get so much help from people. Like a mini-India. Guys, I will be right back. I have to get something from my apartment. *(Geeta leaves.)*

Babul *(makes salivating noise)*: Oh that Geeta, she is too hot yaar *(more salivating noise)*.

Rahul: Ya, we have some *maals*⁴⁴ in our batch, too.

(Neerada is visibly uncomfortable.)

Rahul: Okay seniors, I have a question. Why do these *Amrus* keep asking me about arranged marriages and dowry?

Babul: Because it is very strange to them. I get asked silly questions too. Like how did I learn to speak English so well after having been in the U.S. for only two months?

Neerada: Oh yeah, I get that too. What are you supposed to say when they say you speak English well?

Geeta: I feel like saying thank you and you too!

Everyone laughs.

Kanchan: Well, here you will find all kinds of people, some who know a lot about the rest of the world. I play trivia with a group of people and most of them are Whites. And they know quite a bit about the world. But some people are just not exposed and they really never thought of trying to find out more information than what they are fed. Like if you see the news and compare it to India, I mean their local news often has very little about the world other than the war in Iraq and all the supposed terrorists they are catching. I have seen stories about dogs, pigs, cats in the local news.

Everyone laughs.

Neerada: One thing I worry most about is how to talk to the Americans. I mean when I talk to you guys, if I say something stupid I can just say *bura mat manna*⁴⁵ and you will know what I mean. But I am not sure how the Americans will take it. So I mostly don't say anything. At least I am not offending them (*laughs*).

⁴⁴ Objects of attraction to be bought and consumed

⁴⁵ Please do not take any offense.

Kanchan: *Amrus* make friends very slowly and cautiously. They are more individualistic and we are more communal. But *Amrus* here are generally quite polite. It is better to just talk about very formal and neutral topics until you are comfortable with the person.

Neerada: *Accha* why do *Amrus* think Indians are not Asians? They keep asking me to tick off the box that says Other when I fill forms.

Abhishek: That I find weird too. They have a very weird idea about Asian countries. For them only Southeast Asian countries are in Asia and South Asia is almost on another continent it seems.

Kanchan: Yeah, I don't get that. It isn't like that in Britain, though, or in Australia, just here in the U.S.

Geeta: Hey Neerada, some of us are going to take a long drive this weekend and go hiking. Come with us, you will have fun. It will be like the Indian college days.

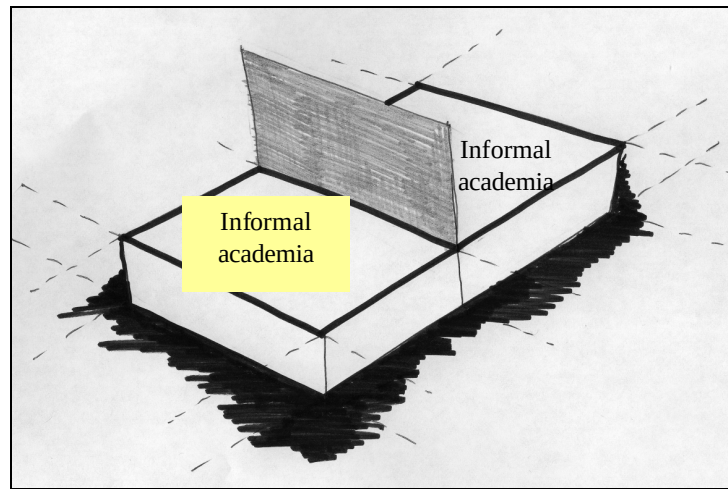
Neerada: Okay, as long as it doesn't conflict with my *puja* rituals. I try to worship everyday.

Scene ends with people carrying on with conversations and laughter.



Informal Academia (Front stage)

A divided department (Same space, but occurring across different times)



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Early September, 2004)

Scenography: A university computer lab. Neerada is seen with Chang, a Korean student, and Gina, a Black student from Kenya, both in their mid- to late twenties. In the corner, Anthony, a Black American technician, is working on a computer.

Neerada: Chang, why aren't you coming to the departmental potluck tonight?

Chang: Because I don't belong there. People usually talk amongst themselves. Sometimes when they talk to me, they ask me things about China and Chinese food, which I don't mind but I would like to talk about other things too like the program, courses I am taking, different educational systems. I don't think people like me there so I am very uncomfortable. When I first came there were only three non-Whites in the program. At least now there are more of us. I feel like there is a divide amongst Whites and internationals in this program. Nothing very bad, you know, but [you] just know that you are an outsider even though I have been here for two years.

Gina: Chang, you just have to learn to ignore that. I mean the other day Katya and I went to the dining hall and we sat at the end of this long table. Most White people walked round and round

and sat in the corner in another table even though there were plenty of spaces at our long table.

Katya was a little upset. I told her we are here to study so ignore those things.

Neerada: You know, sometimes I have noticed that when there is an empty seat beside me in the bus people don't sit beside me right away. Some stand, and some sit elsewhere and sometimes even in a crowded bus, the seat next to me remains empty. First I did not notice, but gradually when it happened more than once, I began to pay attention.

Anthony: That's exactly why I live in the city and not in Arborville. I'd rather drive an hour and a half every day before I'd live somewhere where people first see me as Black and not as a person.

Neerada: I know that there are some race issues in our department. Like I see some of the White students don't even wish Dr. Riley when they pass him by. Other professors are kinda weird sometimes, too, the way they talk to Dr. Riley.

Gina: Oh, Dr. Riley is so good at what he does that no one messes with him even if they don't like his race. That's what you have to do to survive. Be really, really good, twice as good as everyone [else] and concentrate on your studies.

Neerada: See, even if there is all that race stuff going on it is hard for me to think that people are being racist towards me because I don't know how they are being with other people and I never had to face it before. So I am willing to try and go to all the department events. As it is we don't do much and I just interact with people either in class or in labs. So I don't really know many people and they don't know me. Chang, I am sorry to hear that you will not come. I find this concept of potluck very interesting. You invite people over for dinner and then you tell them to bring their own food and drinks (*laughs*) and then people can take their own leftovers back as

well (*laughs*). Please think about it. It will be fun. How do you get to be an insider unless you try?

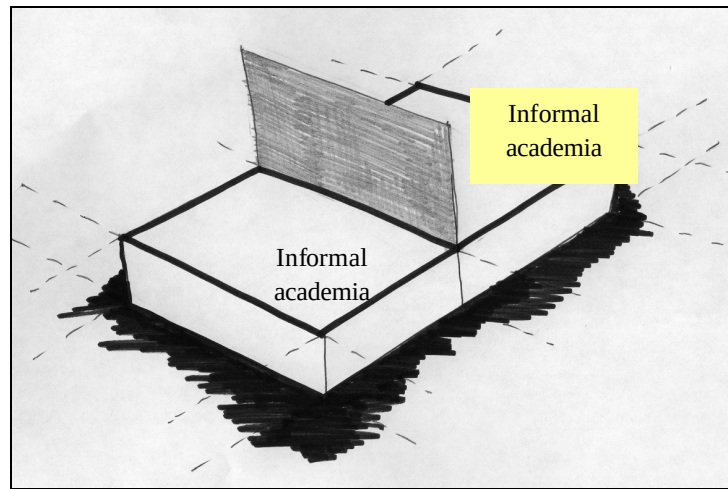
Chang: No, thank you. You go ahead. I'd rather stay in the lab.

Anthony: I agree with Chang.



Informal Academia (Back stage to Informal Academia – separated in time)

A divided department (Same space, but occurring at different times)



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Middle January 2005)

Scenography: Neerada's apartment in Hickory Towers. A large space with a living, dining, and kitchen area, a card table for a dining table, and a bean bag chair. A bookshelf is located beside the table with university-related paraphernalia and pictures of people taking multiple trips in various locations in the U.S.

Neerada: Here it is another Friday. I am getting very lonely. After breaking up with Ashit, I think I realize even more how lonely I am without transportation, cable, or many friends. College life is not the same in the U.S. as it was in India. *(Pauses.)* Well, what is stopping me from making friends? I used to do it in India without a lot of thought. Why can't I do it over here? I will go to my department and invite everyone for a potluck dinner in my apartment for tonight. Late notice, but hey, at least it's a first step.

(Lights fade. When the stage is relit, we see Neerada, busy cooking)

Neerada: Oh, I cannot believe people are going to be here any minute. People in my department said that they will come to my potluck. At least those who did not already have plans agreed to come.

(Ten people gradually come into Neerada's potluck. Most people appear to be of non-White heritage except for two invited guests, Julie and Kevin)

Julie: Neerada, you need any help?

Neerada: Yes, if you can just get people to put the food down on the table that would be great.

(Julie helps in organizing the potluck table while Neerada gathers dishes and drinks for everyone. A clock on the wall should show a four hour time for the potluck. Everyone seemed to have a good time, with laughter and good conversations.)

Bharat: Neerada, there is nothing vegetarian here except for what we made for ourselves. And people seem to enjoy our food. So we might not have any left for us.

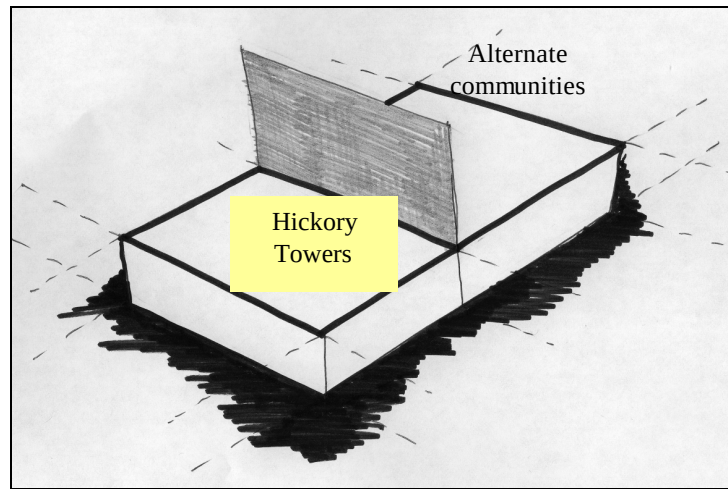
Neerada: Bharat, I don't care. I'd rather not eat dinner, but having people from my department in my apartment in a potluck where I feel like I can build friendships and not have to be lonely on a Friday night is worth it. I guess I don't want to accept the international and domestic divide in our department even though most people here are internationals and not Whites. I don't like thinking that I am different because I am of a different race. It is such a new concept for me.

Sometimes I think that people think I come from a jungle. There is this one professor who always looks at me and my outfits and makes comments. Today he said that my skirt was nice and he could tell it was from India. I was a bit uncomfortable but happy at least he did not say it was from Old Navy. I guess I am just tired of being an outsider. It is a new feeling for me so I am trying hard to fit in.



Hickory Towers (Front Stage)

Mini India - Familiar but modified



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: July 2004)

Scenography: Neerada's student apartment in Hickory Towers. Four to five Indian students in their mid- to late twenties are sitting at the apartment chatting

Neerada: Hey, where can I go to check my e-mail over the weekend?

Kanchan: You can just cross the street and come over to our apartment. And if you need to go to the grocery store or something you can just let us know. We have cars, we can take you. Actually we can pretty much tell you anything you need to know to make sure your stay in the U.S. is as hassle-free as ever. So don't feel shy, just ask.

Neerada: That's great. Thanks so much.

(In the background flash pictures of Neerada hanging out with people from Hickory Towers.)



Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Early January 2005)

Scenography: Neerada's apartment with her roommate and three other senior students in Hickory Towers. Neerada is conducting her daily prayer rituals when there is a knock on her door.

Neerada: I will come down once I finish my *puja*⁴⁶. (*Neerada completes her ritual in the next two minutes and meets the rest of the Indian group in her living room.*)

Kanchan: Hey Neerada, did you go to school wearing that? Those pants and that top make you look like a typical *Amru*.

Neerada: What do you want me to do? Go to school in a sari? Hell, I am wearing the same things I wore to college in India.

Chandri: You know, Neerada, you don't deserve getting rides from us to the grocery store when you haven't spent that much time with us. What have you really done for us?

Neerada: Chandri, I tried, but I had a tough semester and I had a boyfriend. I don't know really what you expected but I really appreciated the help. Whenever I cooked nice food, I took it to Kanchan's apartment. Whenever you had parties in our apartment, I cleaned up after since you never stayed at home after the parties. And if I had free time I hung out with Kanchan and the group. But I did not have that much free time like you guys. I had a tough semester and then I broke up with Ashit.

Rahul: *Kya re*⁴⁷, why did you break up with your boyfriend? Chandri tells us that you fought with him a lot. You know it's cool to have a boyfriend. But people talk badly when they know that girls cannot stay with one guy. How many times can one fall in love?

Neerada: I don't want to talk about my relationship. It's personal. (*Remains silent.*)

⁴⁶ Prayer rituals

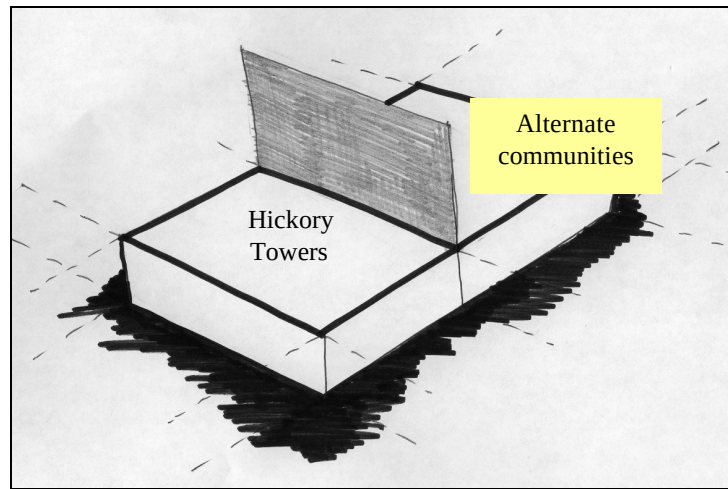
⁴⁷ "What's up" seems to be the closest interpretation.

Chandri: Ever since your father sent you the wireless laptop from India, you spend more time in your room or in your department doing your work. We understand work is hard. That's why we invite you over for coffee to take your mind off things. If you are not going to talk to us or spend time with us or do anything for us, then how can you expect us to help you? Over here, it doesn't matter if you were rich, Brahmin, or whatever you or your father were in India. What matters is how we help each other in our everyday lives by being a real Indian community, providing information, rides, whatever people need, and of course year round entertainment (*laughs*).



Alternate Communities (Back Stage to Hickory Towers)

Mini India - Familiar but modified



Act 1, Scene 1 (Mid September, 2004)

Scenography: Neerada in her Hickory Towers apartment on the phone with her parents in India.

Neerada: Yes, Dad, things are fine here, but I don't like asking other people to use their computers or going to school over the weekend when there is only one bus running and that too just on Saturday

Dad: What do the people say to you when you go to use their computers?

Neerada: Well nothing, but they expect me to do a lot for them. Like when I cook I have to invite them over for dinner or take the food to them. Sometimes they come and eat and leave and don't even wait for me to eat with them. I clean up after parties in our apartment even though Chandri says that she will do it. She never does and she sleeps in another apartment so I have to clean up if I want to keep the place nice.

Mom: What? You do all of that?

Neerada: Yeah, otherwise they make me feel bad every time I need information or ask for some favor.

Dad: Okay, I am going to send you a laptop computer and you are not to ask for help from them.

Find out how you can stop living there and being dependent on people with such expectations.

Mom: And you are there for your studies. Not to cook and clean after other people.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Mid-February)

Scenography: Neerada is talking to some single Indian graduate students who live on campus in graduate student housing. They are in one of the graduate students' apartments.

Raima: Hey Neerada, now you feel comfortable coming here any time you want, right? Last year when Kakali introduced us, you were a bit shy and formal.

Neerada: No, now you are one of my people. Very different from Hickory people.

Falguni: *Haragao*⁴⁸ is not working out for you, huh? (*sarcastic tone*)

Neerada: I think it is very important to have that kind of support when you are starting out. But after a while I found the place too stifling. I mean the people individually are nice, but collectively there are too many expectations and I think I had more freedom in India in terms of what I did with my life than in Haragao, and people did not have such extreme expectations of me.

Falguni: Okay, so now that you have seen us living in these on-campus graduate student apartments, what do you think? Would you like to apply to live here? I think you should, just to get away from Haragao and people who might not let you be yourself.

Neerada: Yes I did and I have already signed the lease for next year. And I have bought a car – not very expensive, just \$2000. But it means that I don't have to ask anyone for rides. I have stopped inviting people over for dinner every time I cook nice food.

⁴⁸ An Indian take on the name Hickory Towers which means "a small village."

Raima: Good for you. We completely understand, which is why we moved here and that's why we have been telling you to come over here and get away from living with three people in one apartment. I don't know what it is about Haragao, the minute you get there they want to know whether you can cook or not, and guys when they hook up with a girl give her recipes from the Internet so that she can cook for him. I can't believe that people really put our worth first in terms of our culinary skills in the year 2005.

Falguni: Well, I think that the men are pampered at home and they want their girlfriends to do the same for them.

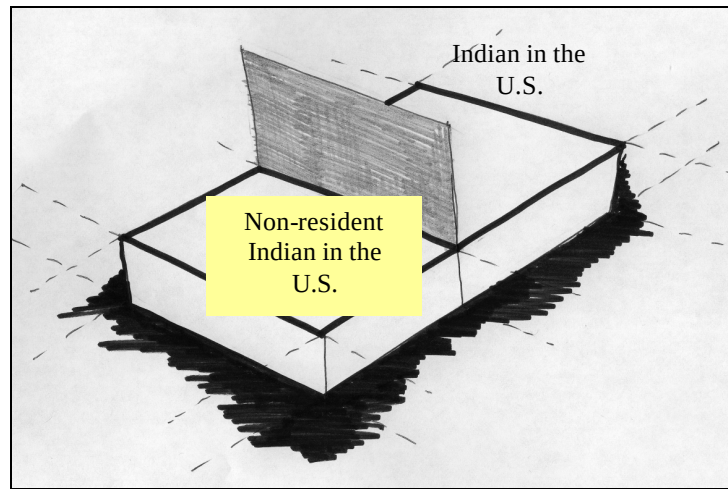
Neerada: I know what you mean about the cooking. They asked me right away if I could cook and I said yes and then the next question was if I had a boyfriend and I said yes and many people looked like I said something horribly wrong because they realized that I cannot be their girlfriend and cook for them.

Raima: That's all the more reason for you to get out of there.



Non-Resident Indian in U.S.⁴⁹ (Front Stage)

Worshipping Religion, Culture



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late October 2004)

Scenography: Neerada's graduate student apartment in Hickory Towers. Neerada is on the phone with her mother from India.

Mother: Neerada, We just finished celebrating Diwali. What happened there for Diwali?

Neerada: Nothing. We did not do anything yet. We are waiting for the weekend when we can celebrate when everyone has the time after doing their jobs, school work.

Mother: That's not right. You should try to celebrate or try to do something on the day of the festival. We had a lovely *puja*; your father performed all the rituals. The Pandey's came by today to wish us a Happy Diwali.

Neerada: Not here, Mama, we will go to a rented high school auditorium or some big hall decorated with saris and they will have some cultural programs but not much religious stuff.

Mother: Then you should just do it on your own. You cannot forget your culture and religion just because you are in the U.S. now.

⁴⁹ Here "Indian" refers to returning to traditional forms of rituals and worship, whereas "non-resident Indian" implies using an improvised form to practice culture and religion

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Late October)

Scenography: Neerada attends an Indian celebration. In the celebration there aren't specific dialogues; people are mingling, talking, eating, praying, and checking out each other's outfits and jewelries. Flash the following pictures in the background.



While people are mingling around in the background, Neerada delivers a monologue. (Play sitar and tabla in the background.)

Sometimes I don't like weekend pujas, superficial masking of Indian-ness

With clothes, jewelry, cuisine, I don't feel religious

In this one-stop-shop, for everything Indian, all-you-can-get buffet

Main course of culture, with side orders of religion and socialization

Generous helpings of comparisons, gossip, and envy, all in one weekend

I'd rather pray in my own home, every day, like Papa used to in Mumbai, India.

How do I find God in a high school auditorium? Walls with American football murals,

Draped over with sari curtains. Players, mascot, audience, cheerleaders in short skirts

Peeking through the sari folds.

I miss the way I used to be, just one of them at the crowded station in Churugate, Mumbai.

Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, languages finding homes in Mumbai

Their colors -- Alta red, turmeric yellow, their flavors -- *roti*, *dhokla*, and fish

All finding rhythms, chiming like the silver bells, on an *adivasi* woman's anklet

I try to hold on to the *small small* things

Memories like pearls on the Queen's necklace, focusing and blurring out of my mind

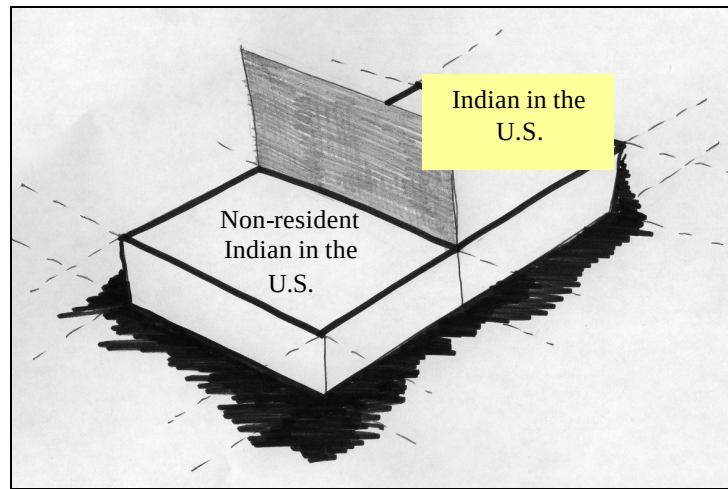
I think of what used to be and what is

It's the *small small* things really, after some time it feels natural, natural to forget them.



Being Indian in the U.S.⁵⁰ (Backstage to Non-resident Indian in the U.S.)

Worshipping Religion, Culture



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Early November, 2004)

Scenography: Neerada is in her own apartment trying to perform a religious ritual on the actual day of the occasion. Two other Indian girls and one guy are attending the puja. Flash the following picture in the background.



Neerada, with folded arms, offers prayers to the Gods. She then turns on some Indian prayer music from the Internet. She offers fruits and sweets to the Gods. Everyone stands with folded

⁵⁰ Being “Indian” refers to returning to traditional forms of rituals and worship, whereas “non-resident Indian” implies using an improvised form to practice culture and religion

arms while Neerada murmurs some mantras under her breath. Then she goes around and offers the *prasadam*⁵¹ to everyone. People offer another final prayer and accept the *prasadam*.



Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: March, 2005)

Scenography: Kakali and Neerada in a coffee shop

Neerada: Kakali, look at these pictures we took at Raima's house during *Saraswati* puja⁵². They are so nice and the best part is we celebrated it on the same day of the puja itself. I like these improvised celebrations where we can perform the festivities on the actual days and not the weekends.

Kakali: What is wrong with the weekends?

Neerada: It feels distorted and not religious but more social. Like instead of having *bhajans*⁵³ in *Laxmi* puja, they had *antakshari*⁵⁴, something we would never do in India even though we are pretty modern in Mumbai. I'd rather celebrate these festivals in as much authenticity as I can. Otherwise I feel like my culture and religion are shipped to the U.S. just for convenience which is only loosely based on the Indian culture.

Kakali: How did you feel when you participated in *antakshari* during *Saraswati* puja?

Neerada: That was not so bad because in Maharashtra⁵⁵, we don't celebrate *Saraswati* puja, so it is okay if it is modified here in some ways because I don't really have any close emotional or cultural ties to this festival. You know that's why I have been performing pujas in very traditional ways like Papa did every day here in the U.S., just to remind myself what it means to

⁵¹ Blessed food

⁵² Religious festival praying to the God of Knowledge

⁵³ Devotional songs

⁵⁴ A game of singing Bollywood movie tunes

⁵⁵ A state in India

be Indian in the U.S. I have noticed that I have become much more traditional in the Indian sense than I was ever in India.

Kakali: Can you think of an example?

Neerada: See, even though I am pretty Westernized, people in my department somehow ask me questions that make me think that I come from an ancient backwards country. People in Hickory Towers make me think that I am stuck in some time warp where the last 40 years of modernization did not happen in India. And then somehow I miss India quite a bit and don't really feel comfortable with the weekend pujas, although something is better than nothing. So I have started being more traditional in terms of what I cook, how often I pray, what I wear. I crave everything Indian much more than I did in India. I mean the other day I was performing a prayer ritual and Shanti came and touched the puja shrine. I did not like it. It was that time of the month and she should not have done it. She knows how I feel about things like that.

Kakali: You don't have to deal with any of that starting next year since you are going to be living in on-campus housing.

Neerada: Yes I know, and I am so glad that you introduced me to Falguni, Raima, and Yamini. I really feel like I can be myself around you guys. I mean, sometimes I feel that you people are much more open minded and Westernized than I am because you have been here longer, but I never feel like anyone forces anyone to be something they are not, or have weird unrealistic expectations. It feels good to begin to make friends in the U.S. I can really laugh with you guys and unwind after a hard day and that is really valuable to me.

Situating Subjectivities and Negotiations of the Plays

Neerada's experiences in the U.S involved a shuttling between the familiar and the unfamiliar. However, she was already aware of the fact that she was straddling tradition and modernity and negotiating the *Lakshman rekhas* drawn around her even when she was in India. In the famous Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, the *Lakshman rekha* refers to the circle drawn around Sita by Lakshman, her brother-in-law, when she accompanied her husband Rama and Lakshman in a 12-year exile from their kingdom of *Ayodhya*. Rama went to hunt down a golden deer at Sita's request, and Lakshman heard cries of Rama asking for help. Fearing for Sita's safety and inability to protect herself from multiple evil forces (read: male predators), Lakshman drew a circle around Sita and told her if she stepped outside the circle there would be dire consequences. Sita stepped outside the circle to offer food to a sage who was Ravana, the King of the Demons, in disguise, and he kidnapped her. Rama's quest to rescue his wife Sita from Ravana resulted in a 12-year war. This narrative is helpful in identifying the various ways local, regional, historical, religious, and national discourses discipline Indian women, and in illustrating how women test the boundaries of their *Lakshman rekhas*, stepping in and out of prescribed lines of control drawn around them to investigate the limits and possibilities of their traveling.

Neerada's shuttling between the familiar and the unfamiliar shows that she is straddling multiple cultural, national, traditional, and liberatory discourses and trying to step in and out of the boundaries drawn around her. She identifies with a movie that shows the negotiations of a woman in an urban lifestyle, who on the one hand crosses the boundary of legitimizing premarital sex without the intention of marriage, yet on the other hand remains within the boundaries of a heteronormative life aligned with other familial and cultural values. Neerada grew up in a progressive family and learned to negotiate between tradition and modernity from a

very young age. Therefore, she dismisses the binary between *Bharatiya Nari*⁵⁶ and a call girl as her only viable options when she relates her own experiences of being neither. Neerada asserts that most women she knows are neither iconic traditional women nor do they lack “moral” values in choosing to cross some of the boundaries drawn by discursive *Lakshman rekhas*.

Prior to coming to the U.S., Neerada perceived herself to be a progressive young woman with strong ties to her culture and religion. She understood the boundaries drawn around her as a daughter, a female student interacting with a male professor, a girlfriend with desires, and an Indian woman. These boundaries are all situated differently within familial, local, national, and religious discourses. Neerada knew that her negotiations of the borders of the *Lakshman rekha* meant strategic accommodations and resistance based on the relationships she shared with people in different spaces. For example, she knew that her boundaries of negotiation were different with her father compared to her advisor, even when she considered her advisor to be a father figure in her life. Neerada’s negotiations were contingent on how she perceived her relationships with members of certain communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2003).

Negotiations in Formal Academic Space

I turn now to a discussion of Neerada’s negotiations in the formal academic space both in terms of her relationships with her advisor and other professors, and in terms of her comparisons between her formal relationships in U.S. and higher education in India. In discussing these negotiations, I demonstrate the tensions in Neerada’s understanding of race, class, gender, nationality, and power relations.

⁵⁶ Recall that *Bharatiya Nari* refers to a very traditional Indian woman on whom all forms of dominant religious, cultural, social, and familiar discourses can be inscribed and fixed, creating an illusory and unattainable norm against which other women are told to measure their worth.

Neerada mentions that her advisor is the only non-White⁵⁷ full professor from Kenya, who has been at the University of Arborville for 10 years. This is significant to Neerada because all other professors in her department are White. Carrying over from India the similar asymmetrical power relations between a professor and a student, Neerada did not overtly resist her advisor. Neerada developed a deep sense of respect for her advisor, particularly because he was the only minority in the department educated in a British system similar to hers, but she was uncomfortable with some of the decisions Dr. Riley made for her. Neerada related to her advisor very similarly to how she related to her professors in India, and she was keenly aware of the differences in power relations.

Neerada understood Dr. Riley's decisions from a patriarchal perspective in which she believed that his decisions, though strict and authoritative, were in her best academic interests. She appreciated her advisor taking an interest in her academic goals and wanted to maintain a "good impression." Consequently, when her advisor informed her of her summer obligations, she felt awkward approaching him or any other person in her department to request formal clarification. In fact, she did not want to entertain the option of inquiry because she was unsure about communication protocols that might lead her advisor and other people in her department to have a "bad impression" of her.

Neerada was unclear about her assistantship contract and how it differed from her research project for her thesis. Without knowing the expectations placed on Neerada for her assistantship and her research project, she invested many hours in the lab in order to meet an imagined set of expectations. When Neerada wanted to exercise her agency to visit India during

⁵⁷ Neerada identified her advisor as non-white to denote that all of the other faculty members were White and that there was a division between Whites and non-Whites in her department. Only when Neerada discussed her first meeting with her advisor did she acknowledge her surprise in discovering that he was Black, since she did not have that racial impression of him through prior phone conversations.

summer, she had to deal with the tensions of being in multiple subject positions – being an international student and being a “good,” non-troublemaking student. Therefore, Neerada would rather take the chance of working unpaid for the entire summer than extend an expensive two-week trip to visit family and friends, in order to maintain the subject position of a good student who gets along with people in the department without causing trouble.

Neerada and I disagreed at points about this interpretation. In the beginning Neerada viewed her advisor as someone who is a strict educator but had her best interest at heart. However, I saw patriarchal and power relations embedded in her interactions with her advisor. When Neerada and I discussed this further, she acknowledged the power relations but continued to focus on her advisor having her best wishes at heart even if this was communicated in a strict, authoritative way.

It is difficult to judge whether Neerada’s relationship with Dr. Baxter, her biotechnology professor, is unique or whether Dr. Baxter offends other students similarly. However, Neerada was insulted by Dr. Baxter’s questioning her competency in English, and later by his laughter at the students’ incorrect answers on their exams. Neerada was conflicted as she negotiated between her disapproval of Dr. Baxter’s behavior and his power to grade her poorly, noting, “My paper was in his hands.”

However, Neerada did not want to construct herself entirely from a victim’s perspective. Even though she knew that her paper was in the hands of Dr. Baxter, she maintained silence and prolonged eye contact with him to convey her disapproval. Whether Dr. Baxter understood the meaning behind Neerada’s prolonged glare is unknown. However, for Neerada it was an agentic move through silence even if her actions might not have impacted Dr. Baxter in any way. It is agentic for Neerada because she was able to test the boundaries of the power relations between

Dr. Baxter and herself and to consider stepping outside the boundary of being an agreeable student and challenging her own understanding of the relationship between a professor and a student.

However, when Neerada handed in her paper, despite her desire not to compliment the professor for his class, Neerada found herself praising the class, perhaps as a way to mitigate any negative consequences she might have brought upon herself since her final grade was still in the hands of the professor. Neerada's move to compliment the class does not negate her agency. Rather, it shows the difficult and contradictory subject positions through/with/against which she has to author herself and her actions, which left her acting inconsistently with her inner desires and thoughts in a manner that reveals the hierarchical relationship between Neerada and Dr. Baxter. Furthermore, Neerada was also racialized by Dr. Baxter, who questioned her English skills while she was experiencing difficulty with the subject matter. Neerada's accommodation to that treatment also reveals the hierarchical relationship between Dr. Baxter and Neerada. The border crossing act of resistance that Neerada performed at the end of the semester against Dr. Baxter's disrespectful behavior then becomes a site of both accommodation and resistance.

Neerada's pride in the modernity of her homeland was somewhat validated when a professor regularly complimented on her looks. From a feminist perspective, I argue that there are implications of sexualization in these comments, though Neerada did not perceive the situation similarly. Although a bit uncomfortable with the attention she received from the professor, Neerada thought that his correct identification of her fashionable skirt being from India rather than Old Navy validated that she is from a modern country and not from a "backwards jungle." Thus, Neerada chose to align more with the subject position in which she was viewed as being from a country whose citizens sport fashionable outfits, instead of my

positioning her as being sexualized by a professor. It was more important for Neerada to be seen as a fashionable, progressive woman, as that was the way she authored herself when she was in India. Upon her arrival in the U.S., such authoring was challenged when she was pushed to a subject position of being from a “backwards country.” This difference of authoring was so salient that it was easier for Neerada to align with a perspective that portrayed India as progressive in terms of fashion than to acknowledge the discomfort she felt as a result of being sexualized for her outfits and looks.

Based on Neerada’s negotiations in the formal academic space, she attached significance to the asymmetrical power relations between the professors and herself in order to strategically author herself through the evolving subject position of a good international student. Such authoring created simultaneous accommodation and resistance, in some cases co-opting Neerada into undesirable acts and decisions. Through her continual participation in the figured world of formal academia, Neerada learned points of flexibility that she could use in order to communicate and negotiate with members of formal academia. Furthermore, Neerada referred to her Indian understanding of a relationship between a professor and a student to make sense of and author herself in relation to her advisor and other professors in the U.S.

From transnational feminist perspectives, Neerada’s selfhood in the formal academic space started from a site of multiplicity in which she negotiated between multiple conflicting subject positions of being a docile, obedient, and good (albeit evolving) international student, and being a troublemaker questioning people in positions of power. Neerada experienced cultural alienation which impacted her deeply. Her feelings of alienation were reduced when a professor sexualized her but at the same time complimented on her easily identifiable Indian skirt. Neerada’s alignment with national pride in modernity in fashion indicates contesting subject

positions, especially when, later on, she notes that she felt like a cultural outsider, a specimen, and would have preferred to be integrated in more meaningful ways into her academic community of practice rather than always being seen as a cultural Other.

Negotiations in Informal Academic Space

At first glance, the negotiations and Neerada's understanding of her experiences in informal academic space appears to be stereotypical. Acknowledging the stereotypical cultural understandings, I discuss the productions of such stereotypes and how they inform the participant. There are missed and misunderstandings of culture enacted by the actors in Neerada's formal and informal academic spaces and in Hickory Towers. However, the production of these stereotypes illustrates a lack of cross-cultural exposure and understanding. Neerada's willingness to discuss stereotypes in her familiar Indian community instead of her informal academic community marks the differences in privileges with which Neerada authored herself in the two spaces.

In her informal academic environment, Neerada, unfamiliar with communication protocols, wanted to belong without continuously being authored as a cultural Other. Hence she didn't think that she could ask questions emerging from her lack of knowledge and exposure with the same ease as her White counterparts. In her Hickory Towers community, Neerada was more comfortable with the communication protocols and therefore spoke more freely, without fear of offending anyone with her questions. Through these missed and misunderstandings, Neerada expressed a sense of cultural alienation within her program which limited her role to attending classes and labs with minimal interaction with other students. Through this cultural alienation, Neerada observed, she was returned to a backwards version of India that she could

not recognize or identify with, and which erased her previous privileges of class, caste, and social visibility.

These scenarios with their homogeneous understandings highlight the cultural gaps between the U.S. and India and the limits and possibilities of multiple discourses that inform the people in both cultures. Given that the study focused on Neerada's initial experiences in the U.S., stereotypes about being an Indian in the U.S. stood out foremost in her mind when considering her everyday negotiations in informal academia. While an awareness of these stereotypes might be generally known, giving voice to these stereotypes helps to illuminate issues of gender, race, nationalist discourses, and colonial influences on both cultures.

From a gendered perspective, Neerada was produced as a docile, submissive, arranged-marrying type woman, a subject position she resisted and clarified. Racially, Neerada experienced cultural alienation when she learned of a racial divide in her department, although she was reluctant to author herself through such race relations. Interestingly, she perceived similar racialized experiences as her non-White colleagues, but wanted to break through those barriers of being the racial Other even though she was aware that she was first an international, non-White person before she was considered a student in her department. She tried to build bridges by inviting people to a potluck, a practice alien to her Indian culture but strategic for Neerada to alter the kind of in/visibility she had in her department. Neerada was also "classed" based on a homogeneous understanding of India in which her progressive, class-based background was invisible in informal academic spaces.

Conversely, Neerada and her peers in Hickory Towers constructed stereotypes about U.S. culture, Americans' general level of intelligence and awareness of the world around them, and the quality of the U.S. media. Perhaps some of these understandings are warranted, just as some

of the understandings held by Neerada's peers in her department were warranted. However, without prolonged exposure and understanding, these communities of practice may legitimize misunderstandings, creating larger cultural gaps than those that currently exist.

Thus, while stereotypes do not promote cultural diversity, they do reveal the discourses with which people identify, exposing certain societal structures through which systems of oppression may be formed, maintained, regulated, accommodated, and resisted. In this case, both U.S. and Indian national discourses with which the actors identified promoted a unified, simplistic understanding of the other culture, thereby creating a center/margin binary of "us versus them." While Neerada did not voice her misunderstandings about Americans to her peers in her informal academic spaces, her frank discussion of such misunderstandings in Hickory Tower speaks to her re-actions as coping strategies to lessen her feelings of cultural alienation.

From the perspective of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 2003), Neerada did not experience being integrated into her formal or informal academic environments. Hence, she sought other communities of practice to anchor herself as she shuttled between familiar and unfamiliar ways of understanding and authoring herself in different spaces. Her negotiations not only demonstrate the multiplicity and tensions surrounding her subject position as a "modern" Indian girl, but also make clear the ways in which discussions of transnational communities of practices could start at a messy multiplicity. Neerada's alliances with some members of her academic and living communities promoted the value of multi-issue, cross-cultural coalitions that question the naturalized cultural understandings, thereby de-essentializing concepts of nation, gender, race, and culture.

Negotiations in Hickory Towers and Alternate Communities

Neerada's negotiations in Hickory Towers depict a complex and contradictory intersection of local, communal, cultural, religious, and national discourses. Most students who live in the Hickory Towers come to the U.S. immediately after completing their undergraduate degrees from India. Based on group conversations, many of them are willing to accept their temporary loss of status and privilege knowing that after completing their graduate degrees, they will have the opportunity to join the other economically privileged Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in the U.S. or return to India and enjoy a privileged existence. Therefore, while the students identify with their shared loss of privileges in the dominant U.S. culture, they create their own figured world in which the yardstick for privilege measures access to and knowledge of resources. By this measure privilege is usually awarded to those who have been in the U.S. for a while, thereby gaining the opportunity to gather knowledge of and access to resources. Oldtimers expect newcomers to participate in legitimate practices to become members of the community; through such participation newcomers eventually gain access to resources like mobility, entertainment, knowledge of where to go to pay rent, information about credit card companies that are more willing to extend credit to newcomers, etc.

When Neerada came to the U.S., she first saw her stay in the Hickory Towers as an extension of the college life that she left behind in India with many social activities, close friendships, and frequent road trips. However, Neerada soon learned that access to those kinds of experiences came at the cost of disciplinary gazes⁵⁸ through which oldtimers inquired about her actions in her relationship with her boyfriend and her role in terms of reciprocating for gaining access to resources. Neerada realized that her former privileges in India were erased and soon

⁵⁸ I use the term *disciplinary gaze* in the same vein as Foucault's use of the term, in which one's behavior and actions are monitored through expectations meted out and normalized through dominant discourses.

began to straddle tradition and modernity in a different way than she had negotiated between tradition and modernity in India. In Hickory Towers, Neerada's chastity came to question when she broke up with her boyfriend, leaving her within the gendered discourses of being a "too easy" or otherwise "improper" Indian girl.

Since her role and value in the community were measured in terms of how well she could cook, she began to cook for the people who gave her access to resources and to clean up after their parties to express her appreciation and accommodation. Neerada experienced objectification by the males in the Hickory Tower community who talked about attractive women as something to consume. In her discussions Neerada expressed her discomfort with such gendering and objectification, which made her distance herself further from the people in Hickory Towers. Neerada's discomfort also stemmed from an unfamiliarity with such gender dynamics, as she did not experience such objectification within her circle of friends in India. She was treated with more respect and dignity in India than in her Hickory Towers community in the U.S.

Soon Neerada noticed that her accommodation to the norms of the Hickory Towers community did not align with her sense of selfhood, and she no longer wished to be the "proper" Indian girl the community required her to be. She began to find alternate communities and resources so that she could construct her own privilege in terms of access to knowledge and resources. She sought her parents' help in securing a wireless laptop, thereby using her class status to position herself with her own resources and to break away from expectations of reciprocity from members of Hickory Towers. She signed a lease to stay in an on-campus graduate apartment complex so that she could move herself away from a community that no longer provided the support she needed. She maintained her caste privileges by praying every

day and by letting people know that she is of a higher caste and that it is through that caste that she wants to author her everyday experiences, thereby attempting to alter some power relations through which she previously felt constrained.

Through her participation in an alternate community (Lave & Wenger, 2003), Neerada began to develop friendships that became more meaningful to her even though she disagreed with multiple positions taken by the members of this community. Neerada's more traditional perspectives were often in conflict with the perspectives of other members of the alternate community, but as Neerada expressed, she could be herself in this community and could develop meaningful relationships similar to those she developed in India. By participating in this alternate community, Neerada gained support and information about resources that allowed her to distance herself from the people at Hickory Towers.

Thus, Neerada first entered a community of practice where she expected to straddle modernity and tradition in a way similar to her experience in her college community in India. When her experience proved otherwise through some legitimate participation in the Hickory Tower community, Neerada learned about the privileges she needed to acquire to transition smoothly into her life as an international student in the U.S. Through support and friendship provided by women from an alternate community and by her family, Neerada was able to identify sources of knowledge and ways to access them, and ultimately to gain access by drawing on this support and her economic privileges from India.

Neerada dismissed the expectations of being a "proper" Indian girl in the Hickory Towers community and embraced the openness of her alternate community, where disagreements did not mean the withdrawal of support or friendship or the renegotiation of reciprocity. These acts of resistances are little known and perhaps not revolutionary, but they are everyday acts of courage.

Moreover, they illustrate the power of the camaraderie that created a community allowing Neerada to cope with her multiple experiences of alienation and to discover possibilities that aligned better with Neerada's sensibilities.

Indian and Non-resident Indian in the U.S.

Being Indian as well as a non-resident Indian in the U.S. created another shuttling experience between the familiar and the unfamiliar for Neerada. On the familiar front, she enjoyed cultural and social activities and events. On the unfamiliar front, Neerada found some of the religious celebrations to be artificial, unusual, and not as religious as she remembered from her experiences in India. Moreover, her parents reminded Neerada that being Indian meant that she needed to adhere to Indian customs and practices even when no one around her might be observing festivals on their actual dates. Neerada responded to this suggestion by starting a daily worship ritual--something she didn't do while living in India--and celebrating festivals on their actual dates. In her alternate Indian community, Neerada found solace when the members put together improvised worshipping on the actual day of the religious festivals.

Neerada lamented the "distorted" nature of commemorating cultural and religious events through weekend celebrations and said this practice revealed a superficial masking of "Indianness" which she found to be unfulfilling. Her need to indigenize the festivals remained limited to those festivals with which she was familiar and which she celebrated with great zeal in India. Any other amplified or modified expressions of cultural or religious celebrations were not a disappointment for Neerada. Through Neerada's nostalgic identification with Indian cultural and religious customs and practices, she realized that being an Indian in the U.S. meant that one has to carve out a space to maintain cultural practices. For Neerada this meant anchoring herself to her culture by aligning with more traditional religious and cultural discourses, since most of the

privileges associated with her religion and culture were absent in the U.S. This form of anchoring to aspects of traditional Indian discourse marks Neerada's desire to author herself from strategic sites of privileges and accommodation to existing patriarchal and colonial norms that dictate Neerada's behavior as an Indian woman in the U.S.

Neerada's transnational existence seems to be in flux due to the continuous changes in the production of her experiences and her re-actions to those experiences. She straddled tradition and modernity in varied ways. She began to develop an alternate individualized understanding of U.S. culture in contrast to her previously held homogeneous understanding. Neerada acknowledged the erasure of her previously held privileges of class, caste, religion, and social visibility even while she continued to author herself from those privileged sites while in the U.S. However, Neerada also struggled between wanting to be a cultural informer clarifying misunderstandings about India, and wanting to be seen as something more than an international, non-White student. Such shifting positionings continued to alter Neerada's perception of the racial, cultural, national, and global boundaries drawn around her. Her understanding of her nationality, relationship to home, and cultural, gendered, caste- and class-based subject positions continued to fluctuate based on her negotiations and movement among multiple spaces and subject positions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on Neerada's negotiations in multiple spaces and the ways in which she accommodated and resisted discursive expectations in those spaces. Neerada's negotiations highlight the critical role of support systems in establishing communities of practice. Furthermore, Neerada's resistance to certain communities of practice demonstrates her

disruption of binaries established to create and maintain unequal power relations, such as those in formal academia and Hickory Towers.

Neerada's realization of her loss of previously held privileges made her re-author herself as an Indian and a non-resident Indian in the U.S. Through such authoring, and as a result of her need to belong in her previous and new communities of practices, Neerada returned to a nostalgic point of Indian tradition and attempted to stay anchored in precisely the Indian cultural relations and practices that she did not actively attend to in India. Such negotiations continue to disrupt notions of race, nation, ethnicity, nationality, and home. The multiplicity of spaces, discourses, experiences, and negotiations created a constant shuttling for Neerada to move between familiar and unfamiliar spaces as she authored herself through an open-ended, agentic, and evolving understanding of herself in these multiple contexts.

CHAPTER 5: *MURGI SE MASALA MAHENGA*⁵⁹, LEARNING THE DETAILS

This chapter demonstrates Yamini's negotiation of her experience in multiple spaces engendered by her transnational existence. For Yamini, the greatest impact of being in a transnational state involved learning the details of survival in her everyday life, which is the inspiration behind the chapter title as, described below. In this chapter, I present a self-portrait of Yamini, authored similarly to Neerada's self-portrait in Chapter 4. Following the self-portrait, I present a timeline and a summary of a list of plays. The plays re-present Yamini's negotiations in front and back stage performances. Like chapter 4, I conclude with a discussion of the findings, based on Yamini's self portrait and the plays, linking them to issues of transnational feminism, communities of practice, and local and global understandings of discourses producing Yamini's lived experiences in the context of higher education in the U.S.



Learning the Details

Throughout this research, Yamini remained extremely busy with her one-year Master's program in business marketing. While we engaged in many informal conversations over dinner, coffee, and weekend get-togethers, a major part of our communication occurred over e-mails and planned conversations. Despite her busy schedule, Yamini was generous with her time and expressed interest in the progress and interpretation of the research. As I analyzed the data for class assignments, job talks, and the final dissertation, Yamini remained interested in the interpretations and continued to confirm, modify, and assist in authoring herself through the data re-presentations.

⁵⁹ The spices are more expensive than the chicken.

During the data analysis phase, Yamini stated that her participation in this study made her feel like she was performing as a central character in her own Bollywood film.

Yamini: I mean it has been busy but lonely for me to be here [in the U.S.] but as we talked about different things I felt like a movie star in a Bollywood movie or something. It seemed that I was always at the center of the story and everything about me is data and my stories are like mini-plots – I am in my own Bollywood movie.

Kakali: I guess you are the star of your Bollywood movie. What kind of movie would it be?

Yamini: Something sensible, like in *Hum Tum*. It was an intelligent movie that showed the reality of being modern and then being in India, which I think is common for a lot of middle-class girls. It had such a universal appeal that I took all my international friends from my department to see it and they loved it. They wanted the soundtrack to it and even my mother said that she could really identify with the *tauliya lao*⁶⁰ type of husband. I feel that the conflicts Rani Mukherjee experienced between being modern and having to deal with the traditional experiences were very realistic. I would want my movie to be like that if I could.

Kakali: Can you think of a name for your movie?

Yamini: Not sure, let me think about it and I will e-mail you.

Yamini took about two weeks to get back to me after we ended the above conversation. During this time, she asked me many questions about the kind of name that would be appropriate, the language in which she should title the movie, and if it should be a name that she made up or a name that was already in a Bollywood movie. Realizing that I did not want to offer any restrictions or guidelines, Yamini sent me the following e-mail:

⁶⁰ Bring me the towel – a way to express the husband's complete reliance on his wife to take care of all his needs.

Dear Kakali,

Here's an original idea -- "*Murgi Se Masala Mahenga*": After you finish laughing, let me tell you why it seems most appropriate to me! :-)

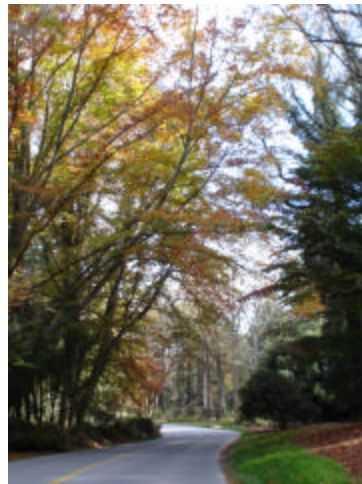
When I came to America, I had the big stuff figured out, such as the fact that I knew I wanted to get into marketing consulting, and I knew I wanted to be in the U.S. but I did not (and often still don't) know the small stuff like how to put in a light bulb (As I told u, Vijay taught me that over the phone! :-)) or how to cook, clean, use a washer-dryer, how to drive, how to pay bills, how to open a bank account, etc. :-) In fact, I would think that this may be a recurring theme in the lives of many Indian girls who move to America to study or to further their careers.

Bye for now...Catch u l8r!

Yamini



Yamini – A Self Portrait



I am an international student in the U.S. from India in a one-year graduate program in Business. Before coming to the U.S., I was in Mumbai, India. I love to be in big cosmopolitan cities. That is probably why I missed home during my first year in a small town like Arborville in the U.S. I consider myself a fairly modern girl but it is important to me to consider what my family wants for me as I know they only want the best for me. But sometimes I feel selfish if I want to do something with which my family disagrees. I guess for Indian girls, our decisions are not just ours but our families' as well.

I come from an affluent family in Mumbai, where my father holds a top administrative post in the Indian government. My mother is just a housewife. My brother just returned to India after completing his MBA in the Netherlands. I was used to servants and chauffeur at home who took care of us in all possible ways and my mom oversaw all the domestic stuff. I never had to worry about money, mobility, or access to information or any other resources when I was in India.

While I was in India, my parents were looking for suitable grooms for my arranged marriage. While I am not opposed to the idea of arranged marriage, I find the process quite funny at times especially when families try to make sure that there is horoscope and astrological compatibility before they would even proceed any further. Some people provide every possible piece of information on their entire family short of a blood test. I come from a high caste as well so my family has to look for people in the same caste and with astrological compatibility. I think arranged marriage is a very practical option for me because I can avoid meeting guys who are unsure about commitment and can avoid going through the heartache of many failed relationships. But I wasn't ready to be married so pursuing higher education seemed like a good idea.

I think higher education was always expected of me both on a personal level and on a level that increases my eligibility in the arranged-marriage marketplace. If I am highly educated then marrying up would mean that I would be looking at guys who are well situated in their lives like doctors, lawyers, business professionals, etc. Although I had an MBA from India, I felt the need for more specialized training in marketing which was limited in India. My family was supportive to an extent, although my father did not understand the ongoing craze in India to

come to the U.S. But overall, my family agreed that I needed to complete my education before I got married or started working.

When I was preparing to come to the U.S., I needed a lot of information that I did not get from the University of Arborville. In my desperation I had emailed hundreds of people across the country. The people who responded most of the time were non-Indians. Indians typically did not respond, except for a few people. Three days before I was leaving I came to know that there is an Indian Students' Association (ISA) in Arborville. I still did not have a clue where I would be staying once I arrived in the U.S. Then I contacted the ISA and they said no problem, just come and we will figure something out for you. I met Ganesh, a representative from the ISA, at the Holiday Inn where the airport shuttle dropped me off and then he brought me to my new home.

My stay in the U.S. has been an incredible learning experience, especially since I learned to adjust to living in a new country where everything seemed different, from the side of the road that cars drive on, to the way light switches work. Coming from an affluent background, being in the U.S. was challenging in terms of learning the little details like how to do laundry, cleaning, paying the bills, how to buy my books, a laptop computer, and all sorts of things. I was pretty sheltered in India and never had so many responsibilities for my survival or existence. America taught me to cook as I downloaded recipes from the Internet after being frustrated with raw or overdone food. What my mother couldn't teach me in India, America, time, and desperation did. My mother thought that I have become perfect wife material now.

I lived in a mostly Indian apartment complex community called Hickory Towers. This is not a place to experience cultural exchange as the people mostly mix with one another. Since my program had so many meetings, socials, out-of-town trips, and conferences, I did not always get a chance to participate in every event at Hickory Towers. People called me a snob and I took it as

a compliment. I stayed with three Indian girls in a two-bedroom townhouse in Hickory Towers. Thank God that I had my own room because we did not get along well as their living preferences and mine varied constantly. I became good friends with some other Indian girls who lived in an on-campus graduate student apartment complex and with the international (and some domestic) students in my program.

I never had to interact with Indians as a separate community, which is strange as you begin to realize that being Indian doesn't automatically build the kind of community that you were once used to in India. Being in the U.S., my sense of Indian-ness became much enhanced through my interaction with both Americans and Indians. I find race relations strange in the U.S. especially because I did not have to experience any kind of discrimination in India. I knew the South would be not as cosmopolitan as Chicago and New York, but some of my racialized experiences in Arborville made me surer about relocating to a large city if I choose to stay and work in the U.S.

I find it strange when people ask me questions thinking that India is a backwards place. A lot of people are surprised to hear my English, praising me for picking up the language so quickly. What they don't know is that I have learned both English and Hindi at the same time at a young age in India, so I do most of my thinking in English. In Mumbai, like in many other parts of India, we use Hindi and English together ("Hinglish") in our conversations on a regular basis. Often I don't even realize that I have said something in Hinglish or in British English until my American classmates or professors start giving me strange looks or laugh at me.

My experiences in my program were mostly good and some not so good. But I really enjoyed being exposed to multiple cultures of the other international students and going to different places in the U.S. with my peers as part of conferences, career fairs, and socials. In my

program we had eighteen people, of which eight were international students and the rest were White students. We were required to learn networking in career fairs and in seminars as part of our program, which I found to be one of the most intimidating aspects of the program.



My classes were taught mostly from an American business perspective, even when we were learning about multinational companies and off shore work. In my classes, if we talked about business from a global perspective people kept bringing it back to American perspectives when what I really wanted to hear was more about multinationals operating in the global marketplace. But I did not say anything about it to avoid drawing bad attention towards me.

Socially, I quickly realized that there are some people who prefer to stay with their own kind and those were the students with whom I wasn't able to make friends. I associated mostly with international students and some White students as I became aware of cultures that I wasn't exposed to in India. I remember at the beginning I was feeling lost in America, without a car and

mentioned to my classmates that I did not know how I would go grocery shopping or anywhere for that matter, especially since I chose not to become too close to the people at Hickory Towers. Katie, a White student in my program, who hung out mostly with the international students, told me that she would give me rides anytime and I shouldn't worry. And she kept her word every time I asked her for a ride and gradually we became close friends.

I had the familiarity of Indian educators, as two of the professors including the program director were Indian, who often spoke to me in Hindi when we were working together on a project and helped me out throughout the program by providing me with access to many resources, encouragement, advice, and with opportunities.



One thing that I have noticed after being in the U.S. is that generally people, and by people I mean some graduate students and some professors, are not always well informed about what is going on with the rest of the world. In my program the international students talked about this all the time. The Americans have their own way of understanding world geography. People didn't even think that I am Asian and told me that I am East Indian (or Other) even though I am from the northern part of India. I know it is supposed to be contrasted with the West Indies, but that sort of way of calling me an Indian is neither here nor there.

My first year in the U.S. was an intense experience of learning to survive and finding a balance between my studies, adjusting to America, dealing with roommate issues, operating on an everyday level, and marketing myself to potential employers in career fairs and conferences. For me it was especially harder than the American students because I was looking for companies that would be willing to process my work (H-1) visa. My dad told me that he could find plenty of good jobs for me in India so I should go back and not accept any job from a small no-name company in the U.S. That increased my stress and doubts about staying in the U.S. even more. Finally I had six job offers, of which three were immediate rejects because they were not paying me enough. I chose a company in a large cosmopolitan city up north where I would be making 70k a year plus lots of bonuses.



Learning the Details: Yamini's Negotiations in Multiple Spaces

The following plays demonstrate Yamini's interactions and negotiations in multiple physical, temporal, and imagined spaces, producing her transnational experiences in the context of higher education in the U.S. Thus, the plays can be performed simultaneously in multiple front and back stage spaces where the production and negotiation of discourses, actions, and experiences are illustrated. Six pairs of stages are presented, representing spaces in formal and informal academia, career fairs, Arborville town/U.S. culture, living communities, and memories of India reinforced by visits from Yamini's family to the U.S.

The following table presents the list of plays separated temporally and/or spatially to provide an overview of the performances. Alternatively, the plays could be performed sequentially as presented in this chapter with a revolving stage for front and back stage plays. The goal of presenting these plays is not to fix an understanding according to my interpretations.

Rather, the audience can encounter Yamini's experiences any way they choose from the presented timeline, creating their own understandings and gaps since there is no feverish rush to any climactic ending.

Play	Front Stage	Back Stage
Learning to be an international student in the U.S.	Formal academia	Alternate communities <i>Adda</i> space with Kakali
Arriving at the U.S. corporate marketplace	Career fairs and networking	Formal academia
Friendships, belonging, and learning about other cultures	Informal academia	Informal academia (time- and people-based)
Adopting a lifestyle, learning the details	Hickory Towers	Alternate communities
Being a female non-White foreigner in the South	Arborville/U.S. culture	<i>Adda</i> space with Kakali
Independence versus social status: Doing what I want	Family visit to the U.S./ Memories of India	Non-resident Indian in the U.S.

Table 5: List of Front and Back Stage Plays

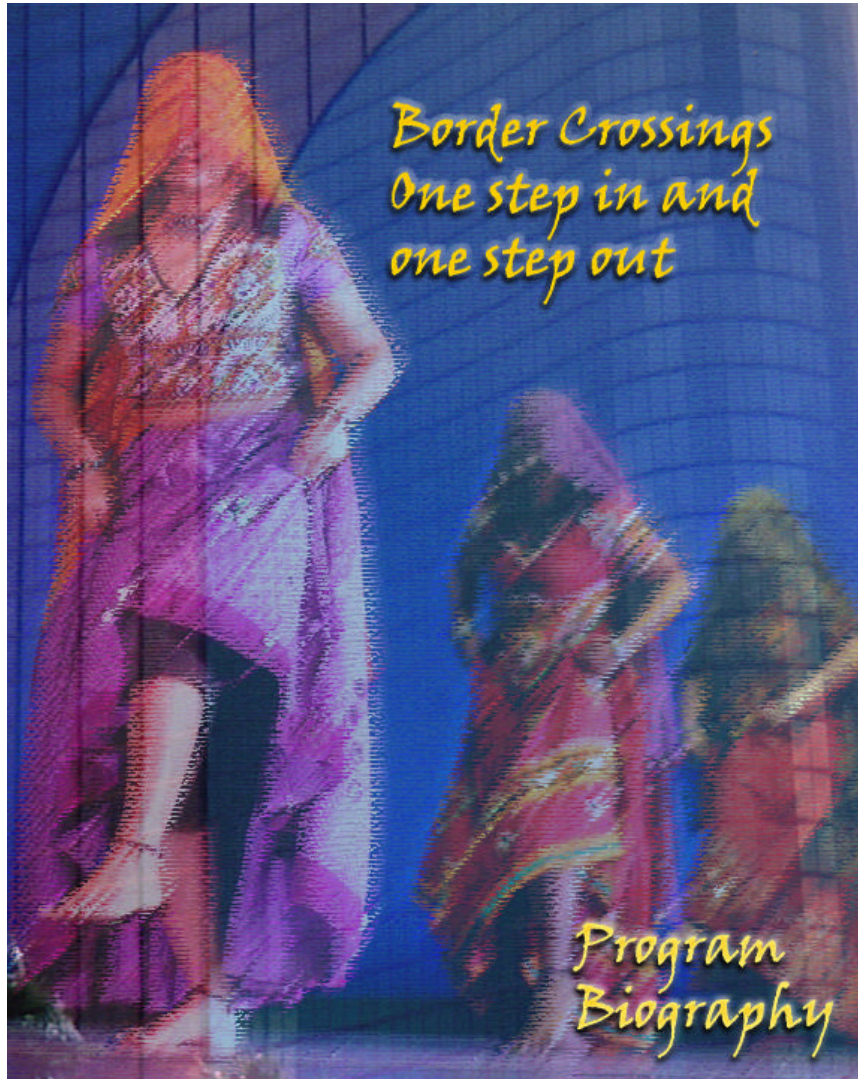
While front stage and back stages are relational, and a back stage can be a front stage to the audience members who are the intended viewers of back stage performances, for the purpose of reading convenience I mark front and back stages in the following plays. The program brochure represents a non-sequential introduction to the plays which can be easily adapted to sequential representations.

Event	Time
Formal Academia	
Initial discussion with advisor regarding assistantship and program	July 2004
Classroom experience with a professor labeling students as international and non-international	October 2004
Discussions of experiences in academia with people in On-Campus	November 2004
Graduate apartments and <i>Adda</i> with Kakali	January 2005
Career Fairs and Networking	
Initial discomfort with networking, criticized by another Indian marketing professional	August 2004
Othered by a female Indian marketing professional	November 2004
Courted by potential employers without any job offer	August 2004 – January 2005
Encouraged and supported by advisor with employment leads	Early January 2005
Offered six jobs	February 2005
Nominated to deliver graduation speech in front of industry sponsors,	March 2005
alumni, professors, and students	End of April 2005

Informal Academia	
Feelings of invisibility with some White female peers in program	Mid August 2004
Finding and belonging in alternate student community in program (international and two White female peers)	Early September 2004
Hosting first ever cooked lunch for friends in the program (international and two White female peers)	October 2004
Discussing cultural differences among peers	November 2004
Self-reflection	January 2005
Hickory Towers	
Learning details of everyday life	July 2004 – January 2005
Conflict with roommates	July 2004 – January 2005
Finding support from alternate communities	August 2004 – May 2005
Arborville/U.S. culture	
Felt harassed by a drunk tailgater	September 2004
Felt harassed by a preacher at the student center	Late October 2004
Discussion with Kakali about race and being Indian in the U.S.	November 2004
Family visit to the U.S./Memories of India	
Surprised at Yamini's acquisition of domestic skills	December 2004
Father saddened by Yamini's domestic work and labor	December 2004
Pressure to return to India	December 2005
Yamini deciding about her future; resisting parents' pressure for immediate marriage	April 2005 April 2005

Table 6: Timeline of Events – Yamini’s Negotiations

Program Introduction: The Plays



Program Biography

Welcome to an evening of Border Crossings where you are encouraged to view every act with both acceptance and suspicion. The actors portray characters that maintain and cross many borders in their lives - all of which are partially true and partially fictional.

As you enter, you will see several front and back stages set up for your viewing. Throughout the evening, there will be simultaneous plays performed in all of the stages. You have stage passes to all of the plays and can migrate around as you please.

These are stories of two female Indian graduate students pursuing their studies in a south eastern state University in the U.S. The stories depict the first six to eight months of their stay in the U.S.

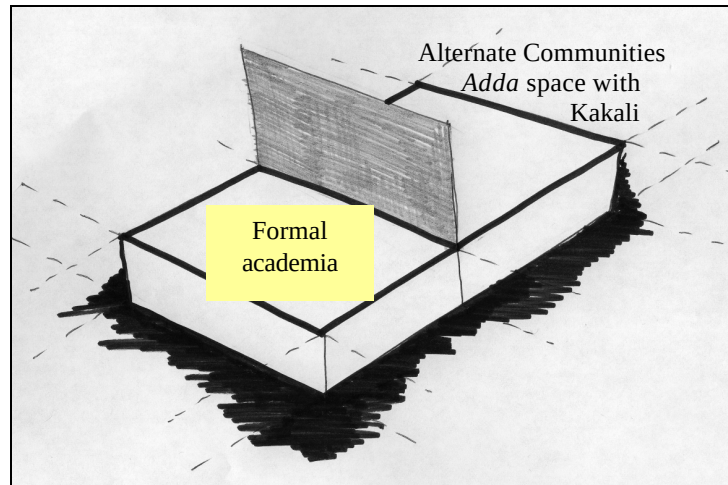
The protagonist, Yamini request that you experience her stories not only based on what is told but also based on the untold, the silences.

Tonight's emcee will be around after initial introductions for further elaboration after the plays are concluded.



Formal academia (Front stage)

Learning to be an international student in the U.S.



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: July 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is in her advisor's (Dr. Murthi's) office. Dr. Murthi is an Indian professor in his 50s who has been in the U.S. for over 20 years. Yamini mentioned that she was relieved when she found out that the Indian director of the program would be her advisor. Dr. Murthi's office contains a huge desk and tall chair for him and couch-like chairs for visitors, who, when seated, sink into the chairs.

Yamini: Dr. Murthi, thank you so much to you and to Mrs. Murthi for the welcome dinner. It was very nice to have a home-cooked meal after coming to the U.S.

Dr. Murthi: Yamini, you are welcome. I have been like you too, a foreign student here. You are welcome to come by our home any time you like. Now about your assistantship. You will work with me in my lab helping me write papers, but the work will be light research. On the other hand, I will try to provide you as I do with my other students more industry experience than writing papers in the lab.

Yamini: Thank you, Dr. Murthi. I have a question. For the conferences and seminars we have to attend, it says that we have to wear business casual outfits. What is business casual?

Dr. Murthi: Well I am not sure what it means for women so well. But for us it means to not be in suits but still wear nice trousers and shirts. I will get my wife to call you and she can tell you what exactly it means for women.

Yamini: That would be great, thank you.

Dr. Murthi: Now, I know the place you are staying at has a lot of Indian people. I would suggest that you concentrate on your studies and try to be as little involved with them as possible. This is a Master's program that you will have to finish in one year. It will be intense and over before you know it. I lived in an Indian apartment complex as well in my first year and hated the politics and the gossip. So my advice to you would be to stay away from anything like that and concentrate on your studies.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: October 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is in a classroom with her cohort group of eighteen students. Six of those students are White females and four are White males. Two students are from China, one student is from Vietnam, and two are from Korea. There are two students from Kenya and Nairobi and Yamini is the only Indian student in the class. A class discussion is taking place. The professor is a White gentleman in his late forties.

Kelly: Dr. Spencer, I am not sure if consumer preference should be based only on conjoint analysis.

Dr. Spencer: What do other people think about this?

Tom: I think that you can look at market trends first.

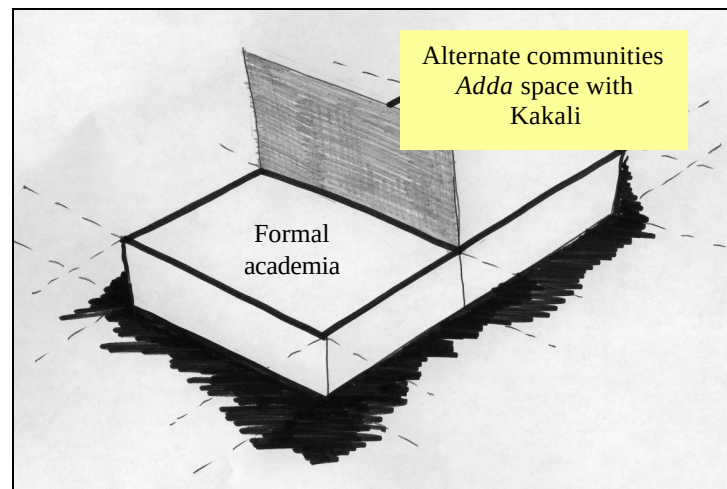
Kelly: I disagree with what Dr. Spencer said, especially if you see what the current market research professionals are doing.

Dr. Spencer: Okay, class, as you know you all have to write a position paper on this. Now I am a little bit worried about you foreigners. You don't have the benefit of knowing the market because of your short duration in the U.S. and then you foreigners . . . um . . . well . . . I suggest at least for most of you to get someone whose native language is English to look over your writing. You can make an appointment to see me in my office hours if you have any questions. Good discussion people. Keep up the good work.

Class is dismissed and people leave the stage. Lights fade to darkness.

Alternate Communities (Back Stage)

Learning to be an international student in the U.S.



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: November 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is talking to some Indian graduate students who live on campus in graduate student housing. They are in Raima's (one of the Indian graduate students') apartment.

Falguni: So how are things going with your program?

Yamini: Oh, it's going great. I am really busy all the time. But there is no other program that is as generous as this program. Pretty much I am getting paid to study. I am not paying anything except my living expenses here and that too comes from my assistantship. My graduate assistantship is hardly any work. I get to do some research but my supervisor is mostly out of town and does not assign too much work. It is basically a little bit of research. He works as a consultant with a major company and I am assisting him with that project as well as part of a course requirement where we are supposed to do an industry project. And now I get to go to Nevada for a data management conference. And everything is paid for.

Raima: Sounds like I am in the wrong program. Actually you are lucky to have a nice Indian guy as an advisor and the director of your program.

Yamini: Dr. Murthi is very interested in getting me a job with the company where he works as a consultant. And from all the conversations I have had with them they are really interested in me too.

Falguni: That's really great. How about your other professors? Are they nice?

Yamini: Sometimes I get the stereotypical questions, like if we have elephants, camels, princes and maharajahs and of course curries. Oh yeah and they know Gandhi (pronounced Gan-di⁶¹).

Raima: If they are a bit more informed then they ask me about dowries and caste system. But most people just know nothing about India so half the time I feel like I am the cultural ambassador of India and like I am speaking for all Indians or all Indian women.

Yamini: There are some professors in my program who don't see any differences between us, the international students. They just lump us into one group as international students. They just couldn't care much about the shades of brown, yellow, and dark brown. But I know you have good and not so good people everywhere. So I only talk to them about class-related stuff. It's hard for me to be frank with professors like people are here in the U.S. For me, my advisor Dr. Murthi is an exception because I spend so much time working for him. And then there is another professor in my program who is an Indian. So if I have anything to ask I usually go to my advisor because he is like my father figure here in the U.S.

⁶¹ This pronunciation denotes an anglicized way of pronouncing Gandhi, which when indigenized is pronounced Gun-dhi.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: January 2005)

Scenography: Yamini and Kakali are talking in a buffet-style restaurant.

Kakali: I cannot believe you are halfway through your program. How do you feel?

Yamini: Before I came here, people told me that assignments and teaching techniques are different and I have to work hard. I found some of that to be true. Students have a lot of voice and can sometimes even argue with the professors, which I cannot really imagine doing in India. Otherwise, in terms of the subject matter, everything is very different because the program here is focused on market research. So I am working in a different market, different ways of thinking about research, different ways of thinking about what the consumer might want here in America.

Kakali: How do you think your education in India played a role?

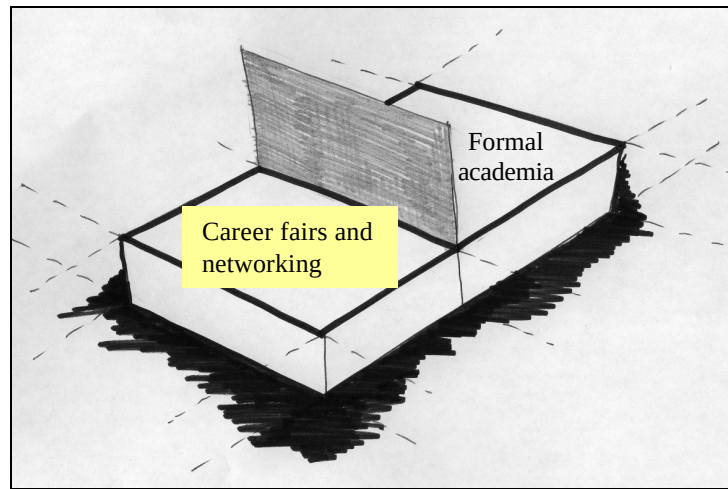
Yamini: I don't think my education in India helped me that much because I had to learn everything from a very different perspective. I am hardworking and that's a skill I think helps no matter what. I had to figure out a way to make sense of what I already knew from an Indian perspective with what I was expected to learn. But I already had an MBA from India and you know how the Americans don't really consider that a real MBA and they want you to do their MBA before they see you as having an MBA. So I really just had to start over again.

Kakali: Do your professors understand how different it might be for international students to learn market research in the U.S.?

Yamini: Well, I have a lot of help from Dr. Murthi. Other than that I have not really said anything to the other professors. I am uncomfortable saying things that I learned from an Indian perspective because everything here is taught by Americans for Americans. So I don't know how my Indian thoughts would fit in unless it's a Global Marketing Strategy class.

Career Fairs and Networking (Front Stage)

Arriving at the U.S. corporate marketplace



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: August 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is at a career fair with multiple booths and representatives at each booth.

People are going up to representatives and initiating conversations. Yamini walks up to a booth, represented by an Indian gentleman, Gopal Bhargava, who is in his mid 50s.

Gopal: How long have you been in the U.S. and have you applied to a lot of companies?

Yamini: For a month now and I have applied to about 20 but they have all declined right away because they don't process foreign paperwork

Gopal: Indians don't present themselves well and Indians don't know how to talk. You should know how to network and mingle and Americans are really polished in the way they present themselves. You need to learn how to market yourself much better than what you are doing now. I see this amongst Indians everywhere after being here for 10 years. I go to India for two months every year and that's what I tell them – learn how to be more like the Americans.

Yamini: Ok, thank you.

Yamini turns away and leaves, rolling her eyes.

Act 2, Scene 1 (Time: November 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is at a career fair at the Arborville Holiday Inn Conference Center.

Multiple booths contain various kinds of gifts from each potential employer. One company has signs for dinner at a local upscale restaurant with the representative, while another company has duffle bag full of personalized gifts. Yamini stops at a table with fruit and Coke that indicates interviews are being held upstairs in the representative's suite. Yamini walks over to the booth that offers dinner at a local upscale restaurant.

Yamini: Hi, my name is Yamini, and here is my portfolio.

Mike: *(White guy, early 30s, speaks with a British accent)* Hi Yamini, very nice to meet you. *(Flips over her portfolio)* Yamini, this is a very impressive portfolio and I would love to chat with you further. Will you be able to come to dinner tonight at the Downtown Café at 6:30 p.m.?

Yamini: Yes, I can be there.

Mike: Okay, then you have come to the best place. We have offices all over the country. Don't make any decisions before dinner tonight.

Yamini: That sounds good. Do you work here or in the U.K?

Mike: No, I work here now but I miss home very much.

Yamini: Yeah, I have cousins there and I loved London when I visited.

Mike: We will definitely have a lot to talk about at dinner then. Remember, don't make any decisions before dinner.

(Yamini smiles, shakes hands, and walks away.)

Act 2, Scene 2 (Time: November 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is in a hotel room with a king-size bed and a small desk denoting a work space. On one side of the desk is a female Indian business professional in her late 30s.

Kirin: Nice to meet you, Yamini. I see you found our interview invitation downstairs.

Yamini: Yes, I did. Here is my portfolio and thanks for short-listing me. I am very excited.

Kirin: There are so many Indians who just keep coming to America just to do any Master's degree and just to get a job in America--any job. They all want to be that perfect NRI⁶² you know, come here, get any odd degree, make a lot of money, and be economically well-off.

Yamini: Can you tell me a little bit about the company?

Kirin: I have been working for this company for two years. That is how long I have been married, too. I married a White American. He works for the federal government. I put my resume on Monster⁶³ and I was on my honeymoon with my American husband. When I got back, there were so many messages and job offers. I had to think hard since so many people wanted me, but then I chose this company.

Yamini: What can you tell me about the position?

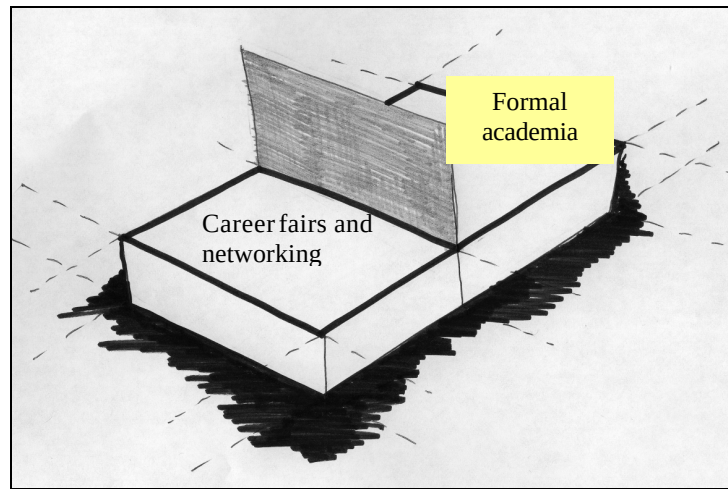
Kirin: Well, you have this portfolio that we will work through with my company. Then we will short-list some more. There should be four or five more rounds of interviews. We will get in touch with you.

⁶² Non-resident Indian (implies someone who does not reside in India but has an Indian heritage or citizenship. For the rest of the dissertation, the term non-resident would imply an emic use of the term from the participants' perspectives).

⁶³ An online employment database

Formal Academia (Back stage)

Arriving at the U.S. Corporate Marketplace



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Early January 2005)

Scenography: Yamini is seen in Dr. Murthi's office.

Dr. Murthi: So how are the job searches coming along?

Yamini: Not too good. Everyone in my program seems to have lined up two or three jobs. I have been short-listed but no job offers. When I first joined the program I did not know what to expect and was surprised that networking and portfolio-building was part of our academic requirement.

In India, there is not so much networking, but in America networking is so aggressive. I had never done that in my life and I felt that I could not go up to people and randomly talk to them.

But I tried to learn how to be myself and still engage in social and professional conversations.

But no one has offered me anything yet. I am a bit worried.

Dr. Murthi: Don't worry about it. I know you will get five or six job offers at the end. Mark my words. Then you would have to figure out which one you should take.

Yamini: That's another thing. My parents are pressuring me to come back to India if I don't get a good job here. And what they consider is a good job may not be what I will get.

Dr. Murthi: Okay, listen, you have worked on a lot of industry projects with me. I will tell them to give you a call and set up some interviews. Don't worry; you will have what you want.

Yamini: Okay, thank you, and in the meantime I am going to keep mailing out my resume.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: February 2005)

Scenography: Yamini and Kakali are at a buffet-style restaurant.

Yamini: I am so relieved that I finally have a job now. I was getting very worried.

Kakali: Congratulations! Where, which company, how?

Yamini; It is in New Jersey, so I am happy that it will be a nice cosmopolitan place. I have just been applying and applying and I have had some really weird experiences with some employers.

Like the first time I met that guy Gopal and he told me Indians needed to be more like

Americans, I just thought he was rude and disrespectful. Everyone has to start somewhere and his company hired Indians for the last three years in a row, but he pretended like he was not

Indian anymore, like he used to be Indian. Then there was that Kirin woman. First her company did not seem all that interested in pursuing us⁶⁴ because they did not offer us much and then the interview was in her hotel suite. I was three feet away from her bed. I felt so uncomfortable!

Then she went off on her marriage to a White guy instead of the interview. And she said that Indians just come here to do any Master's to get a job. It was so unprofessional.

Kakali: Did you get the feeling that she saw herself as an Indian?

Yamini: I don't know. I guess she is whitewashed. You are supposed to talk about your company and sell your company to potential employees. It was as if by marrying White she has become White by association. So I wasn't interested in her or her company. I just kept on applying and finally I had six job offers and I narrowed them down to two, and then I talked to Dr. Murthi and

⁶⁴ Yamini's use of "us" refers to the students in her program.

he helped me decide and negotiate on the final one. In my class we are having a graduation get-together with industry sponsors, professors, alumni, and students at the country club and people in my class nominated me to deliver the graduation speech. I am allowed to invite two people, and since I don't have any family in the U.S., can you please come?

Kakali: I would love to. Congratulations! Tell me more about the nomination.

Yamini: At first they nominated someone else. She did not want to do it. So then they nominated me. I have been very uncomfortable with these kinds of forced social requirements from the start, but I have learned how to hide it or function without letting people know my discomfort. And I have noticed that I am not always as uncomfortable as I was in the beginning so I decided that I would do it anyway.

Act 2, Scene 1 (Time: February 2005)

Scenography: Yamini is delivering a speech to a gathering of a diverse group of people including business professionals, professors, students, and alumni. Her speech is met with laughter at different points. The light shines on Yamini for the following part of her speech.

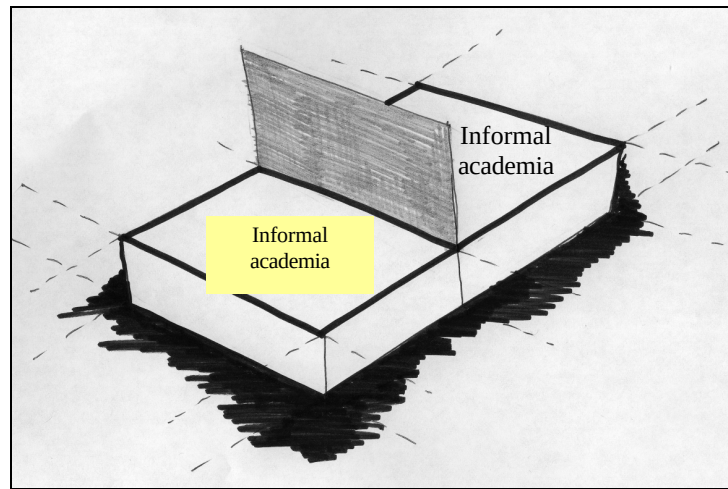
Yamini: Finally, I am supposed to give some words of wisdom. If you have seen the recent episodes of Season 3 of the Apprentice, you may have noticed that one of the teams, Magna, does market research and finds out what the buyers actually want and they have consistently won over the other team. If that is not a testament to market research emerging in the forefront of popular culture, then what is? I think I speak for the entire class when I say that what we would really want to aspire to definitely go beyond bringing market research into the forefront to making it the focal point for marketing departments to work with. Giving back to the program

and helping improve it would be the first steps to this. Yes Dr. Murthi, we will give back to the program. Don't worry; you have raised some great kids.

Everyone applauds.

Informal Academia (Front stage)

Friendships, belonging, and learning about other cultures



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Early August 2004)

Scenography: Yamini and Katie are walking through the University of Arborville hallway. From the opposite end three White females in their late twenties walk towards Katie and Yamini.

Yamini: Hi, how are you guys doing?

Katie: Hi, ladies.

The women do not acknowledge either Katie or Yamini. They walk past them.

Yamini: That was rude.

Katie: You know that they are rude. You don't need to be friends with them. I thought at least they would say hi since I am friends with both the domestic and the international students, but I guess they don't like me being friends with both sides. Anyway, who cares?

Yamini: You know, in class Sally and one of the African students, Damian, were having their own fight. Damian has a habit of talking a lot in class. So Sally went and complained to the teacher to ask Damian to just shut up in class. They are acting like kindergarten kids and Damian is 38 years old and he is just what the hell . . .

Katie: Forget about them. You know Jackie, she lived in Britain for a little bit and loved Indian food. She was wondering if you would be willing to host an Indian luncheon.

Yamini: Oh God! I don't even know how to cook. I have been downloading some recipes from the Internet but I am by no means an expert. Let me get a little bit better and then I will get in touch with Jackie. But I cannot invite the whole class. I will invite 10 people first and the rest some other time since I am not going to serve chips and dips in American style.

Katie: Oh yeah, and we don't have to include those girls who don't say hi to us.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Early September 2004)

Scenography: Katie, Yamini, and other students are in one of the Asian students' apartments.

The people present are mostly international students except for Katie, Ron, and Maggie.

Katie: Yamini, the other day I read some report on the Internet that some monkeys in India attacked some children at a temple. I was so shocked. I really did not know that there are monkeys roaming around freely like that. I always thought monkeys belonged in zoos.

Everyone laughs.

Ron: How can a perfectly intelligent person doing her Master's ask that? Do you think the zoo grows the monkeys from the ground?

Katie: I am just not used to seeing monkeys like that. That's all.

Everyone laughs again.

Ron: Yamini, you know my boss is Indian. Well, the only things I have picked up from her are swear words. I am trying to learn some more in Chinese and Japanese, too.

Yamini: A woman taught you swear words? Wow! Women are not supposed to know or even say those words out loud if they know.

Ron: We joke around a lot. She brings me food. My favorite dish is *saag paneer*.

Pang: Every time I go to the Indian store I buy *naans*. I love *naans*.

Noku: I have been very interested in Indian movies. I love the music and the dancing around the trees. Hey, Yamini, you have any Indian movies that we can see together?

Yamini: You know the Indian Students' Association is hosting a showing of one of my favorite movies, *Hum Tum*, at the student center this weekend. It's only two dollars. We can all go.

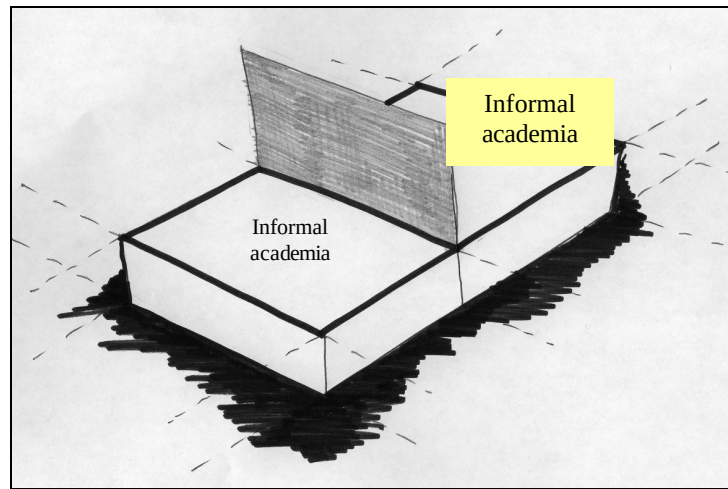
Maggie: That sounds like fun. Let's go.

Katie: You know Yamini, before I met you I always thought of Asia as places where Noku and Pang come from. Probably because that's what people say when they mean Asian here in America. I think because there are a lot of Indians whose English is much better than some Americans' English that it doesn't feel right to lump them in the same group as how we understand Asians. But then when you said India is in Asia, I have been thinking how weird it must be for you to always have to say that to people when you see yourself as an Asian.

Yamini: I think it is an American problem. In Asia people don't see it like that. In London, when I visited my cousins I could say Asian and people did not say that I wasn't Asian. Even in Australia they don't have a problem including all Asians. I don't know why India is not considered as an Asian country in popular culture in America, but it ought to be.

Informal Academia (Back stage)

Friendships, belonging, and learning about other cultures



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: October 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is hosting an Indian luncheon for 10 friends from the program. Six friends are international and four are domestic students. Flash the following pictures in the background. People served themselves and seemed to be having friendly conversations with each other.





Jackie: Yamini, thank you so much for hosting this. The food is just so delicious.

Katie: Actually this is Yamini's first time ever cooking like this and that too for 10 people.

Ron: Do you have recipes you can share?

Yamini: I do. I downloaded them from the Internet and then kept trying different things.

(Katie pulls Yamini aside to have a private conversation.)

Katie: Jackie told Sally and her group that they could come to your luncheon without knowing that they hardly ever speak to us and don't give us the time of the day.

Yamini: I know that Sally is someone that I have never been friendly with. She is one of those people who thinks that I am invisible. She has made remarks starting with "those foreigners," which is so alienating. Jackie asked me over e-mail if Sally could come. The issue was not about her. It's just that if I invited her then I would have to invite the whole class. I just don't have the ability to cook for 18 people because 10 seemed pretty challenging for me to cook for, especially in large amounts. So I told Jackie that I would have another lunch and invite the rest of the people some other time. But that got Sally pretty upset about the whole thing.

Katie: It's okay, don't worry about inviting them. Why should you? It is your house, your luncheon, your efforts, and it shouldn't be wasted on people who don't appreciate you. I really am so proud of you for cooking so well for so many people.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: January 2005)

Scenography: Yamini delivering a monologue.

Yamini: I have seen flavors of India

In people's understanding of India

I learned about other Asian cultures

Cultures of which I knew nothing before

I talk and see differently

Someone told me that I am a minority

In India, I was the daughter of an IAS⁶⁵ officer

I had glamour and prestige. You adjust.

I am more open to understanding my culture

The American culture

I see everything in relation to my own nationality.

Similarities and differences

My program has become my second home

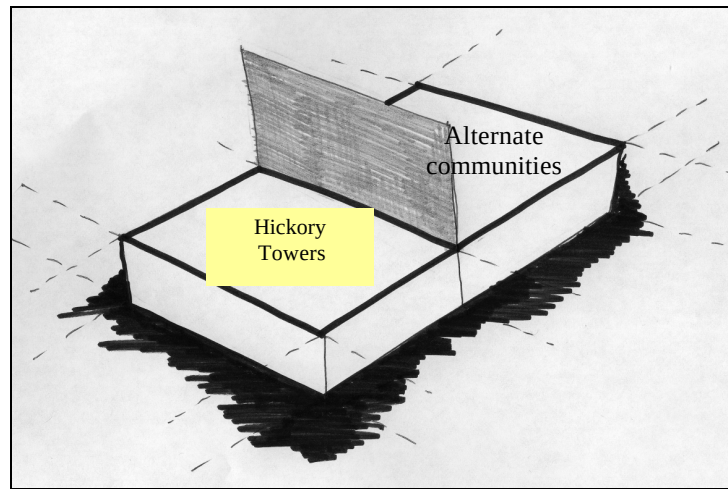
Even with those who think I am invisible

I have become more Indian in America.

⁶⁵ Indian Administrative Service

Hickory Towers (Front stage)

Adopting a lifestyle: Learning the details



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: September 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is on the phone with an Indian man who works in Chicago. Yamini built a friendship with this man over the Internet.

Yamini: Vijay, my roommates are not here and the light bulb went off. How do I put a light bulb in?

Vijay: (speaking in a low voice) Yamini, I am in a meeting right now. Okay, give me a second, let me step out of the room. All right, I am out. (In a louder voice) Turn the bulb clockwise and then turn it anticlockwise and remove it. And then to put a bulb in and just do the opposite.

Yamini: Okay, got it. I have some other questions. I guess you are used to me being an idiot coming to America? (inflection in voice)

Vijay: No, go ahead, what is your other question?

Yamini: I noticed all the switches are upside down. So do they all work the exact opposite way?

Vijay: Yup.

Yamini: Okay, some other questions. When do you know that you want to turn the heat on? And what setting should you use for the washer and the dryer?

Vijay: Okay, listen, I have to go back to my meeting. I will call you tonight and we can have our Coming to America 101 lecture, ok? (Laughs)

Yamini: All right, talk to you later. (Laughs)

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: November, 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is in a conversation with two of her roommates, Rekha and Diya, in her apartment.

Diya: Yamini, we are not too happy that you get the bigger room for yourself. At least share with someone.

Yamini: But I am paying much more in rent than you two. And I am not willing to share my room with anyone else.

Rekha: Things are expensive here and we think that you don't realize that.

Yamini: I realize that. Rekha, I gave you a mattress but it's your right to not buy anything and use a sleeping bag and air pillow to sleep on. But I cannot live like that. So I chose to furnish my space, my room that I pay twice in rent. I refuse to live the way you live. I have a certain standard of living and I cannot give up so much.

Diya: When your mother comes to visit you, then are you willing to pay extra utilities for her shower, or her prolonged television watching in your room?

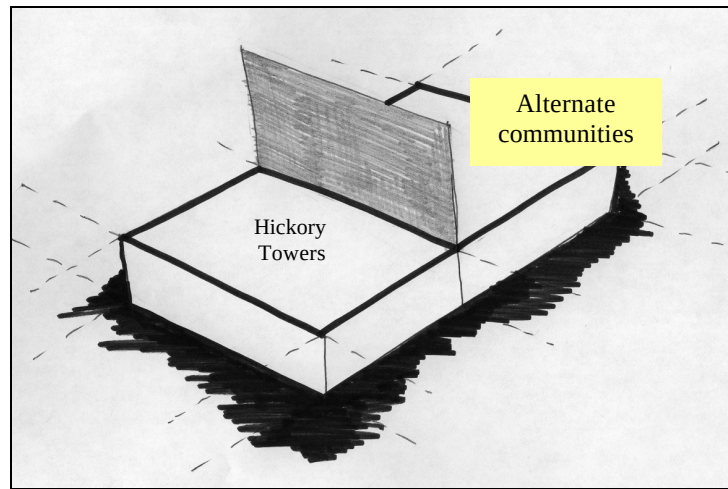
Yamini: That's low. My mother will only be here for 12 days. You use all my appliances in the kitchen; I don't charge you rental fees for that. I am hardly home because I travel for conferences so much. I don't pay lower utilities because of that. And Diya, your boyfriend is here all the time

eating our food, using our utilities and we haven't asked you to pay extra for him. What kind of upbringing do you have to ask such low-class questions?

(The women continue arguing as light fades on the stage.)

Alternate Communities

Adopting a lifestyle: Learning the details



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: Late October, 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is in Falguni's apartment with Falguni and Raima. Falguni and Raima are neighbors and they live in on-campus apartments for graduate students.

Falguni: Yamini, how are things at Hickory Towers?

Yamini: Okay I suppose. I am still struggling to figure out all the little things. My roommates are not very responsible and I find that I am becoming a neat freak and this disciplined, responsible person.

(Everyone laughs.)

Raima: Oh, that's natural. What are some of your responsibilities?

Yamini: Well, at first I did not know how to pay the water bill or the rent. Diya was yelling at me that she did not have a car and she cannot pay the rent on time and she doesn't want to keep asking her boyfriend for a ride. I told her to forget about it and give me the check and I will mail it to the management company. So it's my responsibility to make sure that everyone pays two or three days in advance to give us enough time in the mail.

Raima: That's what we did last year as well because none of us had a car and we did not want to go and flirt with the boys to get a ride from them.

Yamini: You know, if the guys know that you are single and you are friendly, somehow that means that you are easy and that you are either asking for a romantic relationship or if you have ongoing friendly conversations with one guy, he begins to think that you are into him.

Falguni: Yes, it's very annoying. Especially I think it is more common with guys who have never been around women or in a co-educational environment.

Yamini: Diya has a guy in there all the time, and because I don't mix too much with them they call me a snob. I mean I went to the fall events but then my program got busy, and besides, just because they are Indian doesn't mean that I have to hang out with them.

Falguni: Ignore them and concentrate on your studies.

Raima: And you know we are here if you need us.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Late January, 2005)

Scenography: Yamini is in Raima's on-campus graduate student apartment with Raima, Falguni, and Kakali

Yamini: My roommates are driving me crazy!

Kakali: What happened?

Yamini: When my mom visited for 12 days last month, they were so mean to her. She was being a typical Indian woman. She would get up and see how dirty the other people left the apartment and so she would start to either do the dishes or sweep the floor. And people did not care or say No, aunty, please don't bother, let me take care of it. They would just pass her and not even acknowledge her. I was so surprised. I tried to tell her not to do any of it but she couldn't stay

there and watch it get so dirty without doing anything about it. I wondered about the kind of upbringing they had and if they are used to just watching their mother do all the work while they pass her.

Falguni: Well, you know how their upbringing is when they asked you to pay extra for her water and television use.

Raima: Listen, you are only there for another four months. But if things get bad, you are more than welcome to stay with me.

Falguni: Or with me.

Kakali: Or with me.

Yamini: First there was just a lot of screaming. Now when I close the door I just shut them out. The only problem becomes when we have to settle the bills. We communicate via e-mail to settle our bills so we don't have to talk to each other. I am only speaking to Rekha, but Diya and I are not on speaking terms anymore.

Raima: Make sure you get your security deposit back by leaving before any of them does so they cannot blame you for the apartment and then make sure that none of the bills have your name on it.

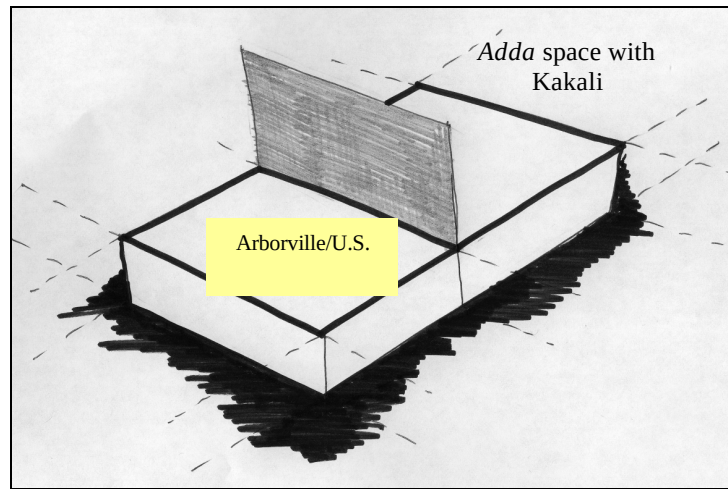
Yamini: That's the thing. None of them wanted any bills in their name and so most of them are in my name except for rent, I think the three of us are in it together.

Falguni: Cancel them the day you have to leave.

Kakali: And don't get into any deals with them where they say that they will keep paying the bills once you are gone. If you don't live there you are not responsible for bills.

Arborville/U.S. (Front stage)

Being a female non-White foreigner in the South



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: September 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is walking back from a football game, which has not yet ended. She has two pom poms in her back pocket. There are tailgaters on the sidewalks who seem drunk while watching the game. A White guy in his early twenties approaches Yamini with a pitcher of beer while his friends are looking on and laughing.

Guy: Hi, nice pom poms

Yamini: *(Ignores the greeting and continues to walk.)*

Guy: Hey, can I have your pom poms? *(Looks at Yamini's back pockets, from where the pom poms are hanging.)* They are so cute and sexy, give it to me just once, I just want to wave them to my friends over there. *(Points to friends who are now cheering him on and laughing.)*

Yamini: *(emphatically)* No! *(walks faster)*

Guy: *(laughs at Yamini)* Give it to me just once. I want to play with those pom poms. Why do you hate me? *(laughs again)*

Yamini: *(screams, body is shaking, voice is shaky)* No! *(walks faster)* *Lights fade on stage.*

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Late October 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is at the University of Arborville campus outside of the student center. A

White man in his early 50s walks up to Yamini with a Bible in his hand.

Man: Excuse me, do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Yamini: Sorry?

Man: Do you think that he died for all of our sins?

Yamini: I don't know. I am not sure.

Man: What would happen to you if you died today? Will you go to heaven?

Yamini: *(appears confused)* I don't know.

Man: What is your religion?

Yamini: I am a Hindu.

Man: The Bible says that if you don't accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior you will go to hell.

Yamini: Okay . . .

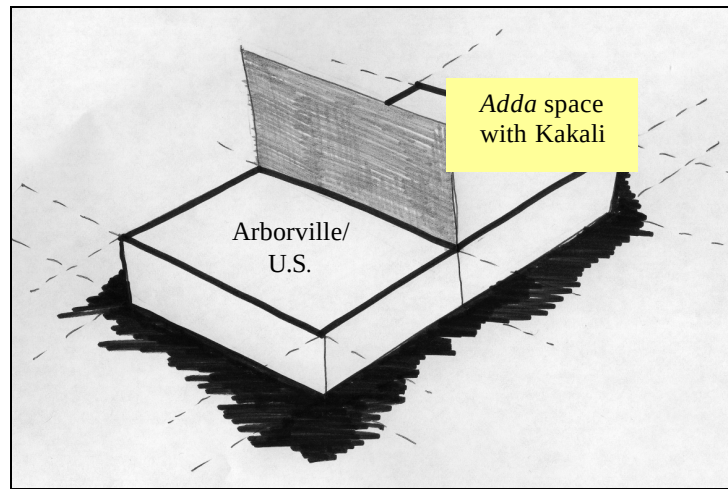
Man: Listen, we are having a get together at our church this Friday evening. Why don't you come? We are very friendly people and there will be ladies there and they can tell you what the Bible teaches about women's role in this confusing world. And in the meantime, this is my gift to you, this Bible *(hands Yamini a mini Bible and a business card)*.

Yamini: Thank you.

Man: Have a blessed day.

Adda Space with Kakali (Back stage)

Being a female non-White foreigner in the South



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: November 2004)

Scenography: Yamini and Kakali are seen in Yamini's apartment sitting at the kitchen table.

Flash the following picture in the background.



Yamini: I am so sure now that I definitely don't want to stay in the South. I want to be in a big city where there are people from different cultures if I stay and work in the U.S.

Kakali: Why? Did anything happen?

Yamini: I was coming back from the football game just thinking that I did not find it interesting at all. People were just wrestling with each other. The score was 16-3 and I have no idea how it reached there. It was just a weird experience and all these people were jumping around and

cheering and I could not understand why. I was thinking that there is such a cultural difference.

But in some ways they are similar, too. Like the frenzy around cricket is the same way people are wild about football over here. But it doesn't happen that people get drunk in India over cricket as they do over football here.

Kakali: That's true. Is it because you did not like football or the frenzy that you want to move to a bigger city?

Yamini: No. I was walking back from the stadium with pom poms in my back pocket and I forgot that I put them there. This White guy comes up holding a huge pitcher of beer and said hi to me and I said nothing. He said give me your pom pun and I would like to just wave it once and I was like no (*raised voice*) and he was laughing at me the whole time and so were his buddies. He kept on saying give it to me once, and I kept on walking faster. The whole time I just kept on saying no.

Kakali: How did you feel?

Yamini: Scared, harassed. He might have had a bet with his friends. I don't know why all these things have happened to me. I was jogging once on Magnolia Drive going up towards Birch Street and there was a car coming from the opposite direction and kept on slowing down and when they came right up to me, there were a group of guys and girls in the car who put out their middle fingers for what reason I don't know. I was just going my own way. I did not say anything to anyone. I did not even know who they were.

Kakali: It's interesting that it happened to you because it happened to me too when I first came to Canada. A group of kids driving by us gave us the finger too. At that time, I was too naïve and young to know what that finger meant and my parents told me that it was something really bad. I did not understand what we did to those kids for them to be so mad at us.

Yamini: Wow, it happened to you too? I guess no matter how long you have been here you are never White and in that way you and I face racism the same way. It feels very alienating. And you know it wasn't that I was doing something very Indian. I was doing something very American. I was just jogging.

Act 1, Scene 2 (Time: Early January, 2005)

Scenography: Yamini and Kakali in Yamini's apartment at the kitchen table.

Kakali: Did you come to U.S. with any stereotypical understanding about Whites or Blacks or anything like that?

Yamini: No, not about that. But everyone expects America to be very wild in India. And in fact I find America to be so much more conservative than India itself. And much more religious and conservative. I never expected that. Maybe because it is the South but still overall I find this country especially after the election has freaked out and become super conservative. Feels like the only ideology that is important to this country is Christian ideology. Everything is God this and God that – like God only cares about Americans and not about other people and other religions. That was the most shocking thing to me. But in so many ways I find America to be so conservative that it is stifling at times. Especially the South feels like an Indian village culture. They keep an eye on you and want you to go to church on Sundays and women are supposed to behave a certain way.

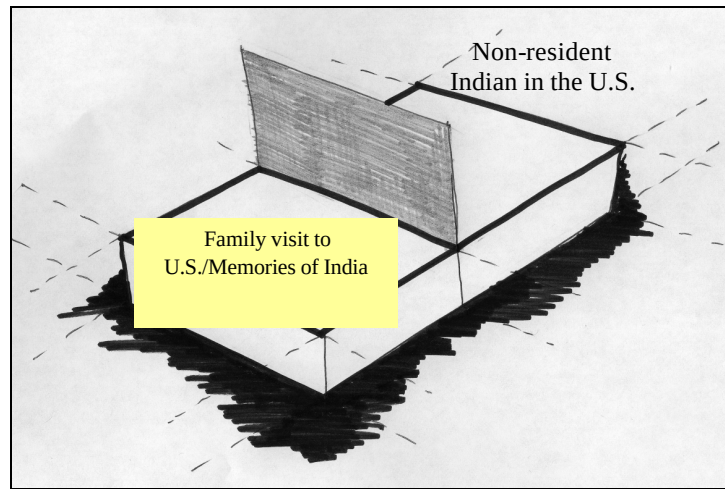
Kakali: So with all the Westernized upbringing you had in India, you did not know about American religious ideologies?

Yamini: No, I did not. And in fact the more Indians I see who live in the U.S., and their pretentious ways, the more I want to hold on to my culture. I attend all Indian religious and

social festivities, even though they are not the same as they were in India, just to stay connected to my culture. You know when I was in India, I used to think eating Indian food, dressing in Indian outfits, listening to Indian music, watching Indian movies, they were too old fashioned and uncool. I was into everything Western. Then in America, I had to interact with Indians as a separate community, which I never had to do before. People did not see me as a progressive modern Indian girl, and I felt I was always representing a backwards India and trying to educate people about the advancements India made in the last few decades. So I have become so much more aware of my Indian-ness than I ever was in India and I have now begun to crave everything Indian, food, clothes, music, and movies.

Family Visit to U.S./Memories of India (Front stage)

Independence versus social status: Doing what I want



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: December 2004)

Scenography: Yamini is washing dishes in her apartment while her mother is cooking in the kitchen. Yamini's father walks into the kitchen.

Father: My daughter - this is such a change from Bombay! My daughter is actually standing in the kitchen (*laughs*) and planning to make *parathas* (*laughs*). My daughter is actually clearing the table – what a miracle! (*laughs*) But tell me why you would want to stay here and do all this when you can be in luxury in India? I can hardly bear to see you work so hard. People of our social status don't have to work so hard. I would rather see you pampered and provided for in India.

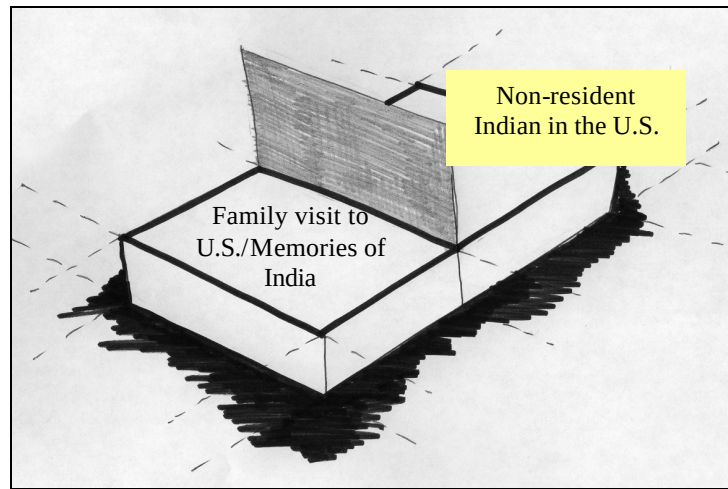
Mother: Oh no, no. I am very happy. She is so much more domesticated, something we couldn't teach her or get her to do in India. Did you know your daughter now gives me advice about recipes and argues with me about how much and what *masala* to put in the food?

Yamini: Dad, I am not ready to go back home yet. I still want to stay here and look for a job.

Father: From what you said, you can only be hired by small companies in your field. If you cannot land a job with a good company like a Fortune 500 one, then I am telling you, come home. We can get you a nicer job in India so you don't have to suffer in mediocrity in the U.S. After that we can look for a good guy for your marriage.

Non-Resident Indian in the U.S. (Back stage)

Independence versus social status: Doing what I want



Act 1, Scene 1 (Time: April 2005)

Scenography: Yamini is on the phone with her parents, who are now in India.

Yamini: I have to tell you that I got a job with the McMurry firm in New Jersey. It is a very good company in my area with offices all over the world and in the U.S. Dr. Murthi said it is a very good opportunity for me.

Father: That's great. Very good!

Yamini: I don't want to be selfish but I don't want to go back to India any time soon. I appreciate all the sacrifices you have done for me, but I want to pursue my career and see what options I have.

Mother: That's all well and fine, but now we have to start looking for a boy for you. What are your specific criteria?

Yamini: I am still not ready for marriage. But you can start looking as long as you let me follow the life of an NRI⁶⁶ for a while. I don't want to throw that away to follow a man's career. I have

⁶⁶ Non-resident Indian

worked very hard for this and don't want to lose my independence. And I don't want to marry a man who makes less money than I do.

Father: I don't want to see you get old without being settled. Besides, people talk and they expect us to find you a husband now. Too much independence is not good. We will get in touch with you with potential suitable boys.

Situating Subjectivities and Negotiations of the Plays

To demonstrate Yamini's negotiations and production of experiences in various spaces was challenging because the physical space in which her experiences took place was informed and intersected by discourses from multiple spaces. Hence, the physicality of a space where an experience is produced can be informed by the production of experiences in temporal and imagined spaces. For example, when Yamini first entered the space of career fairs and networking, she was informed and influenced by her imagined Indian spaces of networking, in which she did not participate in many forced social conversations. This negotiation of subject positions, moving from what was familiar to Yamini to learning how to perform as a professional business person, proved challenging for her.

During her graduation speech, Yamini demonstrated her ability to function in forced social conversations with support from her peers and professors in both informal and formal academic spaces. Therefore, while the event took place in the space of career building and networking, it was traversed by Yamini's interactions in other spaces. Hence, as I discuss Yamini's negotiations, I remind the reader that none of these negotiations exist in discrete foundational spaces; rather it is the interactions and intersections of multiple spaces that continue to inform and influence Yamini's accommodations and resistances.

Like Neerada, Yamini tested the boundaries of the *Lakshman Rekhas*⁶⁷ drawn around her through multiple indigenous and de/colonizing socio-cultural discourses. Yamini tried to challenge the boundaries of expected gendered behavior by postponing decisions about her arranged marriage and choosing to pursue higher education, another desirable option for an

⁶⁷ See the discussion at the end of Chapter 4.

upper-middle-class woman in India⁶⁸. This decision represented both resistance to established norms about marriage and also an accommodation to the upper-middle-class status quo.

Yamini's negotiations focused mainly on her learning to be independent. Such lessons of independence came at the price of erasure of the class, caste, status, religious, and national privileges that Yamini once enjoyed in India. Losing such familiar privileges meant that Yamini had to learn to operate within unfamiliar subject positions. Yamini's previous dependence on her parents for her existence became a disadvantage against which she struggled to gain a sense of independence in multiple spaces, including education, career, and choices she wanted to make about her marital status while she learned to live on her own and to master the details that would facilitate her daily existence.

Like Neerada, Yamini found multiple communities of support (Lave and Wenger 2003) through her journey as she learned to be an international student, a female student, a female/minority, and a non-resident Indian in the U.S. Through these experiences, Yamini was able to rework certain notions of belonging, national identity, and cultural authenticity and awareness while she shuttled between physical, temporal, and imagined spaces of India and the U.S. Specifically, Yamini's discovery of her enhanced sense of Indian-ness speaks to the messy intersection of multiple spaces in which she shuttles between discourses of modernity and tradition, existing in multiple contradictions simultaneously.

For example, Yamini enjoyed a Western lifestyle while she was in India, yet never felt questioned that multiplicity and transnational existence. However, while in the U.S., the multiplicity of being simultaneously Western and Indian influenced her to attend to and enhance her "Indian-ness" as she described her newfound affinity for Indian food, entertainment, and

⁶⁸ This is a desirable option because higher education maintains the status quo and increases a woman's marriage marketability.

other traditional elements of the culture. It is through such multiplicities and contradictions that I discuss Yamini's negotiations in the spaces in which the front and back stage plays occurred.

Negotiations in Formal Academic Space

Yamini's primary relationship in formal academia was with her advisor, who is a non-resident Indian professor.⁶⁹ Otherwise, Yamini did not explore relationships with other professors beyond the context of classroom interactions. Early on, Dr. Murthi, Yamini's advisor, mentored her as she learned to be a non-resident Indian and an international student in the U.S. This form of mentoring is similar to a model found in Indian higher education, in which professors serve as guides to students when making important life decisions. Additionally, Dr. Murthi's experience as an international student himself increased his ability to relate to Yamini's experiences, thus providing a valuable source of support. Later, during her graduation speech, Yamini described the role of Dr. Murthy as one of "raising good kids," in other words, being an effective father figure.

During Yamini's first year as a graduate student, Dr. Murthi continued to serve as a resource, especially with his industry connections and his knowledge of what it meant to be successful as a non-resident Indian in the business marketing field. What could have been an alienating experience became instead an experience of belonging, even though Yamini had to learn everything from an "American business and marketing perspective." However, despite the support of her Indian professor, Yamini was aware of her "international" status and the disadvantages of that status from the perspective of other professors. Essentialized remarks about "international" students and their linguistic abilities reminded Yamini that she was not being seen for her abilities, but instead was lumped into a group of students with widely varying

⁶⁹ Both of these professors are U.S. citizens.

academic strengths and weaknesses. Yamini continued to occupy a peripheral space in this community of practice (Lave and Wenger 2003) where she felt “Othered,” although she did not spend a lot of time thinking about her “international” status in her academic community. Contradicting prevalent assumptions about international students’ linguistic skills, Yamini mentioned that her linguistic skills demonstrated her competency in English and Hindi where she, along with other similarly situated Indians, already indigenized English with Hindi. This form of indigenization allowed Yamini to participate in multiple urban Indian cultural nuances which were met with unfamiliarity when Yamini unconsciously used them in the U.S. Moreover, Yamini noted that she thought in English, which demonstrated that she perceived and presented herself differently from the group of “international” students who were perceived to face language barriers.

Not only could Yamini think in English, she was skilled at manipulating the English language indigenously with Hindi. While Yamini refuses to be thought of as backwards, proving her progressiveness requires privileging her colonized upbringing and education. This is the success of colonization, in which benchmarks for the world order are referenced in the terms of the colonizers’ norms. So resisting and accommodating to such structures are always already uses of the “master’s tools”; Yamini is co-opted by her desire to prove her progressiveness in terms of mastering the colonizer’s language and sensibilities.

Similarly, Yamini perceived that her academic success was contingent on how well she could “adapt” an understanding of the “American market and consumer needs.” Therefore, she had to abandon her Indian graduate education in favor of a more homogenized perception of the “American market and consumer needs” unless it was in a predefined, discrete space of “Global Marketing Strategy.” Given that almost half the students in Yamini’s cohort group are

international students, a lack of academic space incorporating international perspectives into the entire curriculum reflects the asymmetrical socio-cultural structures within which students in Yamini's program had to participate.

However, Yamini and her international classmates didn't leave the program feeling disappointed. With camaraderie, support from professors, and accommodation to the curriculum, Yamini felt that her academic experiences offered tremendous opportunities, exposure to multiple potential employers, and increased cultural understanding of the U.S. While Yamini never questioned the Americanization of her program, I continued to think about how her program defined an "American" market and what the implications are for a globalized "American" marketplace in which certain types of views, education, and understandings are privileged over "Others."

In the figured world (Holland, Jr. et al. 2001) of formal academia, Yamini learned that the boundary of the *Lakshman Rekha* drawn around her implied that she had to learn market research from a mostly "American" perspective. However, Yamini accommodated to such knowledge, as she decided to stay in the U.S. and continue to work in the "U.S. market." As Yamini authored herself through these asymmetrical networks of power relations, she continued to strategically inform herself of the limits and possibilities of her decisions using the support structure she found in her advisor, the father figure in her program who continued to indoctrinate Yamini's newcomer status through various types of apprenticeship. Hence, most of Yamini's positive experiences in her program can be attributed to her positive relationship with her advisor.

Having a male department head who was culturally familiar and in a position of power provided Yamini with much needed protection and guidance, even though these benefits were extracted through structures of patriarchy and classism. Yamini lost the class privilege that she

held in India once she arrived in the U.S. However, because Dr. Murthi's class status paralleled Yamini's class status in India, and because Dr. Murthi also came to the U.S. as an international student, Yamini was able to find familiarities through which she could author herself. As a result, she was able to dismiss her lack of class privilege as a temporary stop on her journey, a view that became evident later when she told her father that she would like to enjoy the NRI lifestyle for a while.

In the formal academic space, then, Yamini learned to negotiate between being an international student, a female minority, an Indian with specific characteristics that cannot be generalized within the category of "international students," and a female Indian student. While Yamini saw differences between Indian and U.S. classroom interactions, she continued to straddle the familiar and unfamiliar subject positions of being a "good" international student in the U.S. Yamini's accommodations did not merely reflect the influence of oppressive social structures on international students, but also reflected agency⁷⁰ as she strategically molded to expectations while using her camaraderie with her peers and alternate communities as sites of resistance when needed.

This resistance and Yamini's accommodations in silence and voice in different spaces became additional indicators of power relations and their discursive effects on multiple social structures. Yamini's exercise of personal power in authoring herself in alternate communities when she was "Othered" is a site of simultaneous accommodation and resistance. For example, by not inviting certain people from her class to her luncheon, Yamini exercised her agency to resist being "Othered." However, by agreeing to take on the role of gendered and exotic Indian

⁷⁰ See Bronwyn Davies' concepts of agency Davies, B. (1999). The concept of agency. *A Body of Writing 1990-1999*. New York, Altamira Press: 57-68.

cook, a role with which she did not identify when she was in India, shows her accommodation to both U.S. and Indian social structures.

Negotiations in Career Fairs and Networking

Yamini's negotiations in these spaces appear to be driven by her ability to present herself not only as a business professional who is perceived as a desirable future employee, but also as an NRI interacting with other NRIs. One NRI recruiter informed Yamini that "Americans are better at marketing themselves than Indians." Yamini admitted that she was uncomfortable going to people she didn't know and "randomly talking to them" about job opportunities, which might have been what Gopal Bhargava was implying. However, it is hard to ignore the essentialized and stereotyped nature of such characterizations of Indians or U.S. citizens and the impact of these characterizations on Yamini's negotiations. These discourses continue to promote a binary division between the two cultures and further entrench homogenized understandings of both cultures.

Bhargava's remarks made Yamini more aware of her inability to approach strangers and engage them in social yet professional conversations. Moreover, Bhargava's essentialized characterization made Yamini question her Indian experiences and abilities. Such discomfort need not be attributed solely to culture, as it can be uncomfortable for many people from various cultures to engage in forced conversations, contingent on their own individual history, culture, and negotiations of subject positions. Bhargava's unsolicited advice and aggressive approach with Yamini privileged a colonized view of business professionalism, which Bhargava seemed to advocate. What is interesting about this characterization is that somehow Bhargava, even though he shared the same national and cultural background with Yamini, distanced himself from "Indians." Yamini, perceiving such distancing as pretentious, began to refer to NRIs like

Bhargava as “those people who used to be Indians” to denote the transnational nature of their modified selfhoods.

Yet Yamini continued to learn and began to author a social, networking self at career fairs and conferences; as this was a part of her academic requirements, it was also part of being a “good” international student. Her interaction with a British recruiter illustrated Yamini’s attempt to engage in professional yet social conversations. Within the context of Yamini’s conversation with Mike, Yamini authored herself as a confident business professional. However, within the same time frame, Yamini was again forced to look at herself as a/n Indian/foreigner/recently arrived/international student within the employment context by another NRI, Kirin. While it might seem that NRIs are being generally stereotyped and essentialized through these accounts, it is precisely the dissonance of expectations that made such experiences stand out in Yamini’s negotiations in these conversations.

Both Kirin and Bhargava shared similar cultural and national backgrounds with Yamini. While Yamini did not necessarily expect an effusive welcome from the NRI recruiters, she was surprised at their lack of professionalism and their distancing. They used class status and duration in the U.S. as points of privilege, reminding Yamini of the absence of such privileges in her current situation. Since Yamini did not experience such distancing in India, nor in her program from her Indian professors, she did not expect that another Indian would characterize her position in the corporate U.S. marketplace as being one among many “Indians who just keep coming to America just to do any Master’s degree and just to get a job in America.” Such a depiction not only essentializes “Indians” but also erases Yamini’s specific goals and accomplishments.

Such treatment is not much different from lumping Yamini into an “international” student subject position. As a result of these and other experiences, Yamini began to realize that in the U.S., not only does she have to interact as a minority with the dominant U.S. population, but she also has to interact “separately with Indians” as a recently-arrived NRI in the U.S., which erased many of the privileges of class, social visibility, and Western upbringing that she had in India.

This shift of privileges is complex and paradoxical. In India, historically the upper-middle-class adopted the British and then other Western ways of defining their lives (i.e., in education, upbringing, entertainment, etc.) to align with colonial and capitalist social systems of domination so that they could continue to maintain the status quo (Chakrabarty 1992). Yet such alignment did not produce similar privileges for Yamini in her transnational existence in the U.S. She is “Othered” by the dominant U.S. nationalist discourses which render her a minority, a female international student, a foreigner, and a non-resident alien.

Moreover, Yamini is “Othered” by certain politics of Americanization (read: adaptation) by some long-term NRIs, who erase her Indian upper-middle-class privileges using duration of stay and understanding of Americanization (read: Westernization) as determining factors for acquiring privileges of class, social visibility, and alignment with Western cultural perspectives. Yamini’s paradoxical situation raises questions such as, How do colonizing discourses vary with location, cultural values, and histories? What forms of social structure do such variant colonizing discourses produce and how does membership in multiple communities of practice get defined given the multiplicity of colonizing discourses?

Yamini used her conversational space with me to explore her thoughts about Kirin’s distancing herself as one who is more aware and accomplished in her NRI status in the U.S. Based on Kirin’s discussion about her marriage to a White U.S. citizen, Yamini described Kirin

as “whitewashed” and “white by association.” Kirin’s discussion of her marriage and her derogatory remarks about Indian students in the U.S. prompted Yamini to understand Kirin’s transnational existence from a perspective that glossed over Kirin’s Indian cultural selfhood and privileged a supposed “White”⁷¹ (Western) alliance that seemed at best flawed in its logic and delivery to Yamini.

Being exposed to multiple forms of cultural alienation, Yamini became more interested in narrowing her distance from the subject positions emerging from traditional Indian culture and became more intensely aware of what it meant for her to be an Indian in the U.S. in relation to her Indian and non-Indian professors, friends, and professional associations. This meant that Yamini had to rework her understanding of what it meant, from a progressive, upper-middle-class Indian perspective, to be Western and progressive in a country that is considered the icon of the West.

Such authoring based on altered negotiations of tradition and modernity was demonstrated in Yamini’s final speech at her graduation party. In that speech, Yamini combined elements from entertainment and U.S. popular culture into her academic understanding of her field, and she pledged loyalty to her program and to her field. In the same speech Yamini defined the role she perceived her advisor played, not as a teacher or a mentor but as a parent “raising great kids.”

Thus, in the figured world of career and networking, Yamini attached significance to her advisor’s suggestions and guidance, which facilitated resistance against various forms of alienation from the more seasoned and experienced recruiters. She learned to function in uncomfortable spaces of networking and forced social conversations. The outcome that Yamini

⁷¹ I use the term “White” based on Yamini’s use of the term without implying a homogeneous “White” cultural group.

valued out of the interactions was an ability to present herself in a manner that would make her employable. It is through Yamini's understanding of her experiences in this space that she formed new subject positions of being traditional, modern, and Western, which simultaneously placed Yamini in a space of traditional Indian-ness and in a space of Western-ness from which she acted and re-acted.

From transnational feminist perspectives, Yamini's resistance and accommodations to her recently discovered status as an NRI in the U.S. showed various forms of de/colonizing discourses at work, which at times dismissed the need to assimilate to U.S. culture and at other times necessitated accommodations to open the doors of class, status, and visibility privileges from U.S. cultural perspectives. Since India was colonized for decades even before the British, there is no pure "traditional" Indian culture. Thus, Yamini's return to tradition is limited to spaces of tradition where her memories and imagination would allow her to go. These spaces are intersected with various patriarchal, colonial, and cultural discourses that maintain and naturalize certain gendered, colonized cultural norms as tradition, something Yamini rejected previously while she was in India.

Negotiations in Informal Academic Space

Through Yamini's interactions with peers in her program, she learned about belonging and alienation simultaneously. Yamini became more aware of multiple cultures, including U.S. and other Asian cultures that she was not exposed to the same way in India. These friendships allowed Yamini to experience being unique in terms of her cultural background and also belonging to a group based on certain collective experiences. During the earlier part of the program, Yamini faced alienation from some White female classmates and was able to identify some gaps between domestic and international students. However, the group of international

students included some of her White peers and Yamini became good friends with one of them (Katie) who acted as a support structure, a resource, and an intermediary to understanding U.S. culture differently from what Yamini had expected. Yamini's friendship with Katie allowed her to express her frustration when she was alienated, intimidated, and/or confused.

Through the interactions with her peers, Yamini realized that there were new gendered subject positions that she was expected to occupy, like that of a good Indian cook. Due to her upper-class privileged position in India, Yamini had not been expected to cook or do other domestic chores. Yamini explained that all domestic management was her mother's domain, thereby further confirming the local, familial, and national discourses about gendered expectations of a wife and a mother. Yamini had been the subject of Indian modernity with access to upper-middle-class privileges. When she moved to the U.S., however, Yamini's peers thrust her into the same subject positions that she had dismissed in India as inappropriate for her situation. Yamini mentioned that she did not like the taste of takeout and over-processed food. Therefore, Yamini's desire for better food guided her to the Internet to learn how to cook and to the gendered subject position similar to the *Lakshman Rekha* drawn around her mother expecting her to manage all domestic affairs.

Through this accommodation to her new gendered subject position as a good Indian cook, Yamini exercised her agency by inviting to her home people with whom she was most aligned. Peers who rendered Yamini invisible became upset, but Yamini received support from Katie for her decision. Such support became a critical part of Yamini's sense of belonging in the informal academic space. Evidence of this camaraderie can be seen in the humor and banter among Yamini and her peers, which became a site of cultural exchanges. It is through these exchanges that Yamini could see how the "flavors of India" were manifested differently among her peers'

understanding of India. These discussions also became a site of analysis of how the term “Asian” may be inclusive or exclusive of Indians based on the country in which the term is being used. These discussions raise questions of globalized and U.S. understandings of the term “Asian” and of the limits and possibilities for Yamini to live with a forced exclusion from an identification in the U.S. when she continues to author herself geographically and culturally as an “Asian.”

Yamini attached significance to her feelings of belonging to her peer group, and this group provided her with a second home in the U.S. Issues of national and international selfhood became topics of discussion that allowed Yamini to identify cultural similarities to and differences from her peers that cut across race, class, ethnicity, and nationality. Even though Yamini experienced some racialized incidents she did not let her invisibility to some of her peers become the driving force authoring her selfhood, as she had other domestic and international friends who valued her and made her feel she belonged in their peer circle.

From the perspective of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2003), the sharing of similarities and differences among Yamini’s peer group erased the need for categories like oldtimers and newcomers. The domestic students who were part of the group did not use their duration in the U.S. as a point of privilege, thereby refusing to create central and marginal membership roles. The community of practice thus became a site of equals who brought varied experiences through uninhibited and safe conversations.

From transnational feminist perspectives, Yamini had to negotiate multiple subject positions that she either had dismissed earlier or had never considered as positions that she would occupy. When some of those positions were thrust upon Yamini, she accommodated to those positions as strategic moves to improve her daily transnational existence in the U.S. Through Yamini’s interactions with her peers she was able to understand the shifting nature of

her privilege, subject positions, and cultural understandings, as she shuttled back and forth between her (imagined and recalled) Indian cultural awareness and her developing transnational existence in the U.S.

Through such movements, Yamini anchored herself to her program as her second home. She did not mention such anchoring with her relationship with her advisor, her living communities, or any other communities of support, but emphasized the anchoring role of her program and her interactions in informal academia. Yamini's negotiations, friendships, and feelings of belonging raise the question of how one's evolving multiplicity of subject positions can be supported and nurtured so that s/he can shuttle back and forth between familiar and unfamiliar subject positions while negotiating her/his selfhood.

Negotiations in Hickory Towers Space

Yamini's experiences in the Hickory Towers space reveal how she authored herself amidst shifting privileges with roommates who were very different from her. These experiences prompted Yamini to look at her interactions with Indians as a separate community, examine issues of belonging in a community with which she shared multiple similarities, and explore how she defined herself as an Indian living in the U.S.

Being from an upper-middle-class family, Yamini had extensive experience with world travel. Her parents had the financial means to visit their daughter in the U.S. over the winter holidays so that she would not feel lonely. However, Yamini's roommates did not share her affluent background, even though they enjoyed middle- to upper-middle-class status in India. Since Yamini had never before needed to author herself without her class and economic privileges, she continued to author herself through her class and economic privileges to adapt to her new living context. Yamini's roommates did not share in Yamini's preferences for

maintaining what she thought was an appropriate standard of living. These unshared preferences became causes for conflict. When they were unsuccessful in convincing Yamini to share her room, they used her class and economic privilege against her and asked her to pay extra for her mother's 12-day stay in the apartment.

Such negotiations are indicators of the diversity of subject positions in the non-resident Indian student community. While Yamini refused a poor standard of living, her roommates were more willing to sacrifice their standards of living to ensure financial security in a foreign land. Yamini's roommates belonging to middle-class Indian backgrounds had the ability to maintain the same standard of living as Yamini, but chose not to due to their need to feel secure with their minimally earned money in a foreign country. Yamini and her roommates were working from the site of loss of class and economic privileges, but they chose different negotiations and adaptations to their living environments. These conflicts made Yamini feel more at home with her peers from her program than with those with whom she lived.

In these living contexts Yamini learned how to survive independently by mastering the details of maintaining a household and becoming a responsible adult, subject positions that she never assumed while she was in India. Her naiveté became apparent when she asked her friend to tell her how to take out and put in a light bulb, work light switches, run the washer and dryer, and set the thermostat in her apartment. Apart from using her Indian male friend as a support system, Yamini interacted with other female Indian graduate students who lived in on-campus graduate student apartments. This group of friends became an important resource and support system for Yamini, helping her successfully navigate through a community to which Yamini did not feel like she belonged despite being an Indian. This group of alternate Indian friends taught

Yamini the details of survival in the U.S. and advised her about issues such as paying rent and bills and retrieving the security deposit for her apartment.

Through such experiences Yamini constructed a shifting sense of selfhood, integrating the loss of privilege with newfound subject positions. These new subject positions sparked questions about membership in communities of practice, fostered an enhanced sense of Indian-ness, and situated her within a cultural space in which survival meant learning more details than she could previously have imagined. Yamini attached significance both to learning these details and, more importantly, to developing a support system that allowed smooth transitions through this learning process. Learning the details became a theme in her understanding of her negotiations in the U.S., as indicated in her e-mail to me reproduced earlier in this chapter.

In the figured world of Hickory Towers, Yamini learned that despite being Indian and from similar class backgrounds, people around her had values and expectations that were different from her own. Her displaced membership in Hickory Towers raises question about identities developed through national discourses and the varied ways in which people manifest such discourses. Therefore, being a non-resident Indian does not result in automatic membership in any non-resident Indian community. Being an integrated part of such a community calls for more than shared citizenship.

The socio-cultural practices of the Hickory Tower community differed from Yamini's preferences, and she could not author herself through a complete loss of the privileges that she had in India. Perhaps because Hickory Tower created a "mini India," it became easier for Yamini to continue to author herself through some of the class and economic privileges that she had in India. Yamini remained an outsider to the Hickory Tower community even at the end of this study, after being in the U.S for almost nine months, but she did not regret her peripheral

membership as she discovered a sense of belonging in alternate communities of support. Yamini's roommates, on the other hand, became more integrated members of the Hickory Towers community and therefore did not feel the need to draw on their lost privileges from India. Part of their belongingness in the Hickory Towers community re-presented a fulfillment and belonging in a community that seemed to assist people in their predicaments to build camaraderie and support systems. However, Yamini was able to participate in other communities of support which allowed her to reject her expected membership in the Hickory Towers community.

From transnational feminist perspectives, Yamini's experiences demonstrate that her negotiations cannot be separated into discrete categories of race, class, gender, nationalities, as they were continuously intertwined with/against each other. With varied cultural understandings of what it meant to be an Indian student in the U.S., Yamini aligned with certain discourses designed to maintain some of her privileged status in India in a similar but adapted manner in the U.S. Yamini's experiences are marginal, as few Indian students enjoy the privileges of affluence that she does. However, it is her unique narratives that expose the effects of multiple race-based, class-based, and other differently privileged social structures and discourses.

Negotiations in Arborville/the U.S. as a Female Foreigner

Although issues of race and culture were present in other spaces as well, I address this space separately for Yamini because her experiences in this space affected her deeply and prompted her awareness of her racialized subject position in the U.S. These experiences informed Yamini's decisions about the possible location(s) of her future employment, the recruiters with whom she socialized, and the industry projects she selected to work on as part of her program requirement.

Yamini's sexualized experience with her pom poms raises issues of gender, race, cultural understandings, sexuality, and the body from both U.S. and Indian cultural perspectives.

Yamini's experience during a football game demonstrated her efforts to learn about the culture of football. Although she did not enjoy the game, she was able to understand the football frenzy using a similar cricket frenzy in India as a reference point.

However, her experience in the U.S. differed due to her encounter with publicly accepted drinking and the resulting drunken behavior. Public drinking is not allowed in India and those who drink on the street are regarded as having suspicious backgrounds and failing to uphold legal, moral, or religious ideals. Yamini was understandably scared and uncomfortable when she was approached by a White student with a pitcher of beer in his hand. His attention to the pom poms in her back pocket sexualized Yamini's desire to carry football paraphernalia home. Moreover, his repeated requests to "Give it to me at just once. I want to play . . ." made Yamini feel sexually harassed and disrespected. Yamini tried to exercise control over the situation by repeatedly refusing his requests and finally screaming at him. I found the scream powerful – more than just a refusal of the guy's requests. As Yamini told this story, the volume of her voice increased, her body started to shake, and it seemed like she was saying no to being disrespected, no to being sexualized, and no to being a victim.

While Yamini did not bring up race in relation to this incident, she related it to another experience in which she was more clearly racialized, in which a car of young people pulled up to her while she was jogging and gestured at her with their middle fingers. She characterized both experiences of harassment with the assessment that, "No matter how long you have been here, you are never White . . ." What came as a surprise to Yamini was that despite her non-Indian (read: Americanized, Westernized, and not "backwards") behavior of jogging, people found her

offensive enough to “give her the finger” unprovoked. By being forced into unfamiliar subject positions ascribed to Yamini due to her Indian looks, Yamini realized that her progressive upbringing was invisible even when she participated in what she considered to be progressive pursuits. Through these experiences Yamini realized that she was a minority and stood out differently in U.S. culture, and especially in the South.

Another experience of harassment that led Yamini to consider her gendered role as an Indian woman in the South was being interrogated about her religion in the student center by a Christian White male. He invited her not only to attend his church, but also to learn her “proper” gendered role through Christianity. Yamini expressed feeling stifled by a network of Christian ideology so pervasive that it erased other nationalities and denied their entitlement to God’s blessings. Yamini identified similarities between the expected roles for southern women in the U.S. and the expected roles for women in an Indian village. Through this comparison Yamini decreased the distance between “backwards” and “progressive” by recognizing that ideological discourses, whether in India or in the U.S., can have similar stifling effects on gender roles.

From transnational feminist perspectives, Yamini’s remarks are useful in arguing against normalizing the West as “progressive” and the East or developing nations as “backwards” or rife with archaic forms of patriarchy that oppress women. Yamini’s experience and her remarks demonstrate that despite her “Western” upbringing, she continued to be “Othered” to the point that she not only felt harassed, but came to believe that her Westernized upbringing was always already dismissed despite her occupation and authoring from those transnational subject positions.

Yamini’s identification of the similarities between dominant discourses outlining appropriate behavior for southern women and women from an Indian village, albeit essentialized,

shows that using one culture as a benchmark for another ignores the complexity of oppression imposed by the network of ideological social structures in any country. While Yamini does not identify feeling stifled by her gendered upbringing, her rendering of a backwards image to ideological discourses normalizing certain gendered behavior in the South reflects the kind of essentialism and benchmarking transnational feminists struggle to eradicate. Certainly the U.S. is no more a site of freedom and liberty for women from oppressive social structures than is India.

However, one culture cannot stand as a benchmark for another as both are riddled with ideological discourses and social structures that are historically specific, complex, and overlapping. By understanding the production and underlying assumptions of such structures, and by undertaking cross-border and issue-based coalitions, transnational feminists⁷² want to organize resistance efforts to dismantle networks of oppressive ideological structures.

Negotiations with Family on Their Visit to the U.S/Memories of India

These interactions demonstrate Yamini's negotiations with her family's expectations and her own becoming (Braidotti 1994), which at times came into conflict as Yamini tried to be an Indian in the U.S. Yamini's parents' reactions to her newly acquired domestic skills not only revealed some gendered expectations but also highlighted privileges with which her father authored himself and wanted to author Yamini. While Yamini's mother was pleased with Yamini's domestication, thereby making her suitable in the arranged marriage marketplace, her father, although pleased, believed that his daughter deserved a much more privileged lifestyle and one which he was able to offer her. It's interesting to note that although her parents had opposite reactions, both responses were grounded in the same goal, which was a desire to author

⁷² I do not use the term *transnational feminism* to denote a form of feminism that becomes the next totalizing regime. Instead, I situate transnational feminism as a concept that begins from a site of multiplicity and contradictions, implying that the ideas informing transnational feminism are as shifting and fluid as the production of experiences and discourses from which various tenets of transnational feminism are developed.

Yamini through class and other forms of privilege. Her mother's enthusiasm for her domestic skills didn't result from her daughter's increasing independence or even from pleasure in her daughter's newfound abilities, but from the mother's belief that better domestic skills would lead Yamini to catch a better (i.e., wealthier and higher status) husband, which would reinscribe or even heighten the class privilege of Yamini and her family. Yamini, on the other hand, was prepared to sacrifice her former privileges in favor of greater independence, even if it meant that she would have to position herself in further unfamiliar situations and subject positions.

Yamini was concerned about her family's expectations for her career as her father continued to draw the *Lakshman Rekha* around her, reminding her that her potential employment choices were limited to either Fortune 500 companies or comparable firms in India. Yamini tested the boundaries that her father drew around her by taking a position not at a Fortune 500 company, but at a company that her advisor recommended. Her use of her advisor's support became a way to cross the borders of career and familial expectations. Once she was employed, Yamini's negotiations with her family extended to potential arranged-marriage talks. Yamini tried to react minimally to such conversations, but it was clear that her father would not accept her resistance even when she argued for acquiring her class and economic status privilege in the U.S. by leading an NRI life.

Yamini's negotiations show that she attached significance to her parents' wishes and expectations, but her transnational experiences in the U.S. helped her to develop a sense of independence and a set of expectations that were not always in alignment with her parents' desires. Through her experiences Yamini learned not only how to survive in the U.S., but how to become more responsible, independent, and self-reliant, thereby constructing a shifting sense of selfhood that was unfamiliar to Yamini's parents.

Becoming self-reliant did not mean that Yamini chose to dismiss her Indian upbringing or expectations. Instead, she strategically accommodated, resisted, created, and reworked various subject positions. Recall previous discussions in which Yamini mentioned that she returned to various traditional ways of being an Indian in the U.S., including learning how to cook Indian food, listening to Indian music, watching Indian movies, and participating in as many Indian cultural and religious gatherings she could, even though they were celebrated differently in the U.S. than in India. Nevertheless, while anchoring to some traditional Indian subject positions, Yamini moved away from other traditional Indian subject positions that required her to be married by a certain age or stage in her life. Although Yamini's father had the final word in the last act, Yamini exercised her resistance through silence because she still had time and opportunity to refuse to be married if she did not feel ready. Thus, in her familial community of practice, Yamini occupied both a peripheral and an integrated position depending on her resistances and accommodations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on Yamini's negotiations in multiple spaces, exploring the ways in which she accommodated to and resisted the discursive expectations produced in those spaces. Yamini's negotiations revealed intricate and complex relationships between physical, temporal, and imagined spaces from which Yamini informed and authored herself. Yamini's support systems in formal and informal academia and in an alternate Indian community became primary communities of practice that created feelings of belonging for Yamini and simultaneously challenged membership expectations based on similar national and cultural identities. Yamini's experiences in various communities revealed that her sense of belonging increased when boundaries between newcomers and oldtimers were blurred.

Yamini's experiences were agentic as she conducted herself through voice, silence, and privileges to which she had access. Although Yamini was aware of her loss of her class and economic privileges, she bargained those losses against her new sense of independence. Yamini recognized the erasure of her Indian identity categories in the U.S. as she came to understand what it meant to be a minority; an international student; and someone who is not Asian, but Other. Furthermore, these negotiations that pushed Yamini into being an exotic (backwards?) Indian created a nostalgic return to traditional Indian-ness. Consequently, Yamini became more aware of her Indian-ness in the U.S. than she was in India, engaging in Indian practices and relations as she authored herself as non-resident Indian in the U.S.

Like Neerada, Yamini's negotiations disrupt notions of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, nationality, belongingness, and communities of practice. Yamini's shifting sense of selfhood dismissed any specific definition or meaning of what it meant to be an Indian, female, international, transnational, minority, student in the U.S. However, what her negotiations demonstrated was the pervasive nature of certain gendered and colonized discourses through which people authored her, through which Yamini authored herself, and through/with/against which Yamini negotiated her everyday experiences.

CHAPTER 6: CROSS-PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS

Yamini and Neerada share similarities in terms of nationality, culture and class. Yet when we consider their upbringing and their experiences as transnational Indian graduate students in the US, we find both similarities and differences. Certainly their experiences are idiosyncratic, but it is in the production and negotiations of experiences that Yamini and Neerada demonstrate differing accommodation and resistance to multiple local and global gendered and colonial discourses.

In this chapter I compare the experiences of Yamini and Neerada in similar and different spaces during the course of this study. I draw upon two new fields of literature, namely the literature around the figured world and legitimate peripheral participation, while analyzing Yamini and Neerada's experiences. The figured world refers to:

A socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents who encourage a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of state as moved by a specific set of forces. (Holland et al., 2001, p. 52)

For this study multiple figured worlds were created in communities of practices that indoctrinated newcomers through legitimate peripheral participation. According to Lave and Wenger, legitimate peripheral participation refers to the point where the “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community” (p. 29). However, Lave and Wenger agree that participation is not value neutral but embedded with power relations that inform participants' subjectivities. Accordingly,

Viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means that learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership. We conceive of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another. (Lave & Wenger, 2003, p. 53)

Lave and Wenger introduced the concept of a Community of Practice (CoP) in 1991. They perceived learning to be a social process whereby people participate in a communal learning experience at different levels based on their membership in the community. They described CoP as "a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping CoPs" (p. 98). The idea of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) focuses on cognitive apprenticeships where people have to *participate* in an activity first *peripherally* (on the edges, with minor responsibilities). Gradually levels of participation increase in complexity and responsibility. For *legitimate* participation, actions of the newcomers have to be validated by the oldtimers and have to be consistent with the goals of the community. "Legitimate peripheral participation" is a combination of the above ideas working simultaneously as a newcomer experiences her/his membership in a community of practice.

The value of the apprenticeship fostered in LPP lies in allowing entry to a newcomer in a community of practice. There are times when conditions "place newcomers in deeply adversarial relations with masters, bosses, or managers; in exhausting over-involvement with work; or in involuntary servitude rather than participation," (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.64). Such conditions affect the learning environments and produce a distorted version of membership in the communities of practice. For Neerada and Yamini, when they were perpetually left at the

periphery of the Hickory Towers community, their desire to learn or belong in that community waned.

Communities of practices are generally developed through informal network of people and their collaborative ideas. Communities of practice also overlap with one another as they are comprised of relations between people, activities, and the environments within which they function. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning, i.e., for legitimate peripheral participation. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that LPP "obtains its meaning ... in its multiple, theoretically generative interconnections with persons, activities, knowing, and world" (p.121).

Legitimate peripheral participation has led us to emphasize the sustained character of developmental cycles of communities of practice, the gradual process of fashioning relations of identity as a full practitioner, and the enduring strains inherent in the continuity-displacement contradiction. This longer and broader conception of what it means to learn, implied by the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, comes closer to embracing the rich significance of learning in human experience. (p.121).

In this study, participants followed several principles of Lave and Wenger's CoP and LPP including making multiple connections, involving themselves in apprenticeship models, and remaining at the periphery in certain CoPs. However, they also demonstrated ways they were able to blur structures and create alternate memberships if a CoP did not respond to their needs and values.

Moreover, in this study, the participants demonstrated that they attached significance in their figured world to various acts, actions, actors, and they expressed a need for support and

belongingness through blurring the boundaries of newcomer and oldtimers in communities of practice.

Comparing Neerada's and Yamini's Negotiations

Yamini and Neerada moved in similar and different spaces. The spaces that were common to both were formal academia, informal academia, Hickory Towers, alternate communities of support, and the spaces where they could be non-resident Indians in the U.S. Since Yamini was in a one-year Masters program in Business, she had to participate in multiple career fairs and networking spaces which Neerada did not. Neerada had more time to reflect on the spaces in the U.S. where cultural, social, and religious festivals are celebrated whereas Yamini was busy with her academic requirements. Both Yamini and Neerada thought that their families were an important force in their lives. While Neerada kept in touch with her family over the phone, Yamini's family visited her over the winter holidays to keep her company. Both families played a role in invoking memories of India and what it meant to them to have a daughter who lived outside the country and the associated expectations of being a "proper" Indian girl.

In the following paragraphs, I will look closely at each of the similar and different spaces of negotiation for Yamini and Neerada and take them up individually.

Spaces	Neerada	Yamini
Formal academia	Respected advisor even when she did not feel supported. Practiced acts of resistance and accommodation strategically	Supported by advisor. Did not connect with non-Indian professors beyond classroom requirements
Career Fairs and Networking	No comparable experience	Became comfortable with forced social conversations towards the end of the program after feeling alienated. Marginalized by other NRIs due to her lack of experience and time in the U.S.
Informal academia	Was not as successful in developing a community of support although made efforts towards the end to build bridges. She was informed that there was a racial divide in the department.	Developed a community of support with mostly international and some domestic White students. Perceived cultural alienation from some White students in the department. Certain conversations enhanced her sense of Indian-ness.
Hickory Towers	Participated in community activities only to find that the levels of expectation were beyond her means to meet. Accepted marginalization even at the cost of loneliness. Different expectations about	Did not feel the need to participate in that community. Emphasized that being Indian do not mean that they would be an automatic community. Marginal membership to which she

	being an extension of college life from India.	was indifferent. Became preferential to more traditional Indian food, clothes, and entertainment.
Alternate communities of support	Found the same alternate community as Yamini and mentioned that she thought that she could really be herself in this community without the gazes she perceived existed in Hickory Towers.	Used an alternate group of female Indian friends as a community of support who lived in on-campus graduate student apartment.
Family visit/memories of India	Family memories and conversations became a way for Neerada to stay grounded in her experiences in India.	Family visit reflected gendered and class-based expectations. Yamini desired her independence at the cost of her familiar privileges.
Non-resident Indian in the U.S.	Experienced the need to become more traditional and religious than she was in India. Disliked distorted cultural practices.	Yamini grappled with this issue when she was forced to think of her NRI status by the recruiters. from previous exposure Yamini experienced the need to emulate NRI life of compromised privileges
Arborville/ U.S. culture	Racialized and marginalized experiences. Becoming more aware of race and geo-political location in U.S.	Did not attend to these aspects directly.

Table 6: Cross-case comparison of spaces and negotiations

Comparing Formal Academia

Neerada and Yamini had different experiences in formal academia. Neerada's experiences in formal academia were markedly different from Yamini's. Although Neerada's African advisor played an authoritarian father figure role, she believed he had her best interests at heart. She did not feel that she belonged in the formal academic community the way Yamini did. Her experiences with other professors were negative and Neerada's consequent accommodations and resistances became indicative of power relations and levels of inequalities through which she had to perform in her department. Moreover, Neerada was aware of a racial divide in her department amongst the professors. Although her advisor was not the department head, she knew that he was treated differently than the other White professors in the department. However, both Neerada and Yamini acknowledged that the student-centered learning environment was at times uncomfortable for them due to the argumentative conversations between the professors and the students, an interaction which was alien to their Indian upbringing.

On the other hand, Yamini was supported by her Indian advisor and another Indian professor. Both of these people played a key role in Yamini's formal academic life in terms of guiding her, advising her, and acting as a resource person. Yamini was able to identify them as her father figures rather than advisors or mentors. Yamini chose not to build a relationship that extended beyond classroom practices with any of the other professors and mentioned that in one class she was culturally alienated when lumped together in the group of "international" students. She was disappointed that her specific abilities and accomplishments were erased by such essentialization. But since Yamini was able to develop a close professional and kinship relation with her advisor and another

Indian professor, she did not experience marginalization as Neerada did in her academic community. Furthermore, Yamini's advisor was the department head which allowed Yamini many privileges fostered through the advisor's position and connections. If there was a racial divide in the department amongst the professors, Yamini did not perceive it.

While shuttling between the subject positions of being students in India and being international, minority female students in the U.S., Neerada and Yamini demonstrated (un)intentional distancing, accepting, and adopting of the signs and practices in the U.S. To make the best of their circumstances, both Neerada and Yamini moved between different value systems and moved differently. Neerada's resistance to her advisor's refusal to let her go to India by repeating her intense need to go to India was strategic while acknowledging the unbalanced power relations between them. Neerada's non-verbal resistance to a professor's disrespectful behavior was daring and blunt in Neerada's view; however, she conceded to having a good class and thanked the professor because as she said, "My paper was in his hand."

In the formal academic community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2003), both Neerada and Yamini occupied the peripheral positions of the newcomer. While Neerada maintained her newcomer position longer, Yamini was initiated into the community by her advisor. In this figured world (Holland et al., 2001) of formal academia, significance was attached to being a good student, despite the marginalization that both Neerada and Yamini identified about as a result of being perceived first as international and only then as a student. Both Neerada and Yamini worked hard to achieve the imaginary levels of accomplishments consistent with being a "good international/student." Linking their connection to their Indian upbringing and education, neither Neerada nor Yamini

believed it was appropriate to argue with the professor regardless of their positions. Thus, these relations of power maintained hierarchical and formal relationships between the participants and their professors.

Neerada and Yamini's experiences in formal academia show the existence of multiple non-democratic practices that exist locally, nationally, and globally to maintain unequal social systems of inequalities and unbalanced power relations. These local and global cultures often naturalize certain relationships as "natural" which in turn perpetuate further inequalities. The naturalization that hands down patriarchal and colonial relationships as cultural practices and ways of being only propagates the non-democratic treatment of people and affects their everyday lives in riddled ways. Neerada's experience of cultural alienation further demonstrates how difficult it had been for her to develop a feeling of belongingness and develop an understanding of her evolving role as a "good international/student."

Career Fairs and Networking

Yamini felt some initial discomfort about her expected professional role as a networker and as a successful communicator and of her skills and accomplishments. These expectations did not have an Indian reference point and Yamini was in a completely unfamiliar space and subject position. However, Yamini crossed those borders that she perceived were drawn around her from her experiences in India and tried to accommodate herself to the subject position newly thrust upon her. Yamini was mostly successful in this role as she received continuous support from her advisor. Nevertheless,

it is in this space that Yamini was further marginalized by two non-resident Indian business professionals.

Both Gopal and Kirin, the NRI business professionals, drew imaginary lines around their communities of practice using duration in U.S. and knowledge of assimilation as points of privilege and entry into the community. Their criticism of the overflow of Indians in the U.S. alienated Yamini as evidenced by her comments about Kirin being “whitewashed,” taking too liberal departures from her heritage and people. Yamini rejected the need to enter such a community of practice that alienated newly-arrived Indians. Instead, she authored herself through other available subject positions informed by her successful interactions with non-Indian recruiters and her indigenization of her lifestyle in Hickory Tower. Yamini’s ability to identify with non-Indian recruiters and eventually to find a good job shows that community building in the U.S. for Indians is not always connected to the Otherness through which Indians are constructed and exoticised by dominant and popular cultural discourses. If community building had been contingent on membership at Hickory Towers, where Otherness was regularly disrupted, then Yamini would not have dismissed her cultural membership at Hickory Towers. Instead, she participated in communities where there was an egalitarian approach to interaction and membership.

Moreover, Yamini’s move to traditional cultural practices shows the change in relations to imagined/real memories of home and India, a different kind of transnational authoring, an authoring that can assist with redefining national identities and selfhood. Since Yamini’s racial background became the first visible form of categorizing her in the

U.S., Yamini's negotiated this "Othering" by re-discovering what being an Indian means to her when she is located in multiple cultural spaces.

Comparing Informal Academia

Both Neerada and Yamini were able to form friendships with domestic (White) and international students in their departments. Neerada did not enjoy as much success in forming friendships as Yamini did since her program did not require forced socialization with her cohort group. Neerada did not complain about direct feelings of invisibility in her department, but she often had to dismantle cultural stereotypes and people's understanding about India with peers and with the department secretary, which further promoted her feelings of marginalization. In a conversation with other minority students (domestic and international) in her department, Neerada was able to confirm her "Othered" status although she did not accept that stratification and invited people to her apartment for a potluck, as a way to assimilate, belong, and resist the racial divide in her department. While such moves were received positively by the people who came to know Neerada, due to the lack of opportunities for increased interaction and people's lack of exposure to the Indian culture, Neerada had to combat multiple moments of loneliness and not belonging in her academic community despite her efforts to concentrate on her studies and be a "good international/student."

Yamini, on the other hand, was more successful in forming friendships than Neerada because her program required multiple forced social interactions. Yamini's cohort group was expected to travel together to conferences, seminars, recruitment camps, and many other professional venues. Such interactions created a camaraderie

between them. Initially, Yamini became aware of her invisibility amongst some White students and soon realized that such invisibility came as a result of a divide between international and some domestic students. However, Yamini was able to overcome the alienated feeling as her community of practice with international and some domestic friends offered her the feelings of belongingness which she needed.

Both Neerada and Yamini became more aware of their national and racial subject positions through their interactions in informal academia. It was in these informal interactions that both Neerada and Yamini identified that being Indian often meant coming from a backwards place. They were called on to play the roles of an ambassador. Moreover, Neerada learned that she was not even an Asian and she had to choose “Other” as the most appropriate racial category for herself. These interactions created a dissonance in the ways Neerada and Yamini authored themselves and in the ways that they were authored and thrust by others into subject positions with which they were unfamiliar. Being thrust into these positions often made both Neerada and Yamini state that their sense of Indian-ness was enhanced and they wanted to return to a traditional space of Indian cultural practices and nostalgia as an anchor to their transient and conflicting transnational subject positions.

In their informal academic communities of practice, Neerada and Yamini’s interactions varied as they negotiated their roles as newcomers. For Neerada, the cultural alienation, racial Othering, and minimal interaction with her peers created a community of practice where her newcomer status remained unchanged for a prolonged period. Remembering that her own cultural practices were different from her cultural practices in

the U.S., Neerada attempted to make herself visible as a friendly, fun, socially interactive person.

Yamini, although at first culturally marginalized as a newcomer, reconfigured the informal academic space to blur the distinctions between oldtimers and newcomers by becoming part of a community of support that included all international students and some domestic students. This blurring of status erased the privileges with which power relations remained unbalanced between oldtimers and newcomers. These forms of interactions allowed Yamini to develop feelings of belongingness and become an integral member amongst her peers which became apparent later when she was nominated to address a graduation speech to an entire group of students, professors, and alumni sponsors.

The *Lakshman Rekhas* drawn around Neerada and Yamini were continuously contested in the informal academic space in multiple directions as Neerada and Yamini interacted within the discursive space of multiple social structures of race, nation, identity, culture, and belongingness. These experiences of shuttling create different images of traveling, some of which might include immigration and residency, which is the position in which Yamini found herself, while others include temporary exile, which is the position in which Neerada found herself. Therefore, when the notion of belonging is troubled, the concept of home becomes problematic for a diasporic population.

With both Neerada and Yamini's contestations over an essentialized understanding of Indian culture, they demonstrated that there is no notion of culture that can be universally applied, just as there is no notion of woman around which feminism can define itself. As Neerada and Yamini crossed cultural and national boundaries, they

represented themselves in acts of resistance to definitions imposed on them by colonial, national, imperial, and masculine discourses and power relations. However, this is not to say that such representations were inherently liberating; rather such representations were fraught with complexities, diversities, and ambiguities that were always already informed by multiple local/global social structures. Neerada and Yamini were able to identify the saliency of their negotiations because of their shuttling between familiar and unfamiliar locations, events, and circumstances, and because they learned how to navigate through those liminal spaces.

Comparing Hickory Towers

Neerada and Yamini had similar experiences while living in Hickory Towers. However, they took different paths to arrive at their final dismissal of Hickory Towers as a community promoting belongingness for Indian graduate students in Arborville.

Neerada at first perceived the Hickory Tower community as an extension of the college life she had in India consisting of multiple social connections, a community of support, and similar straddling between modernity and tradition that any woman raised in Mumbai would be familiar with. Unfortunately, when these expectations were not met, Neerada began to author herself differently in terms of what it meant to belong in a community that is visually, nationally and culturally similar to one's own. Neerada, whose academic schedule was less intense than Yamini's, spent more time in the Hickory Tower community than Yamini.

Through her negotiations, Neerada realized that she was incapable of performing to people's expectations to express her gratitude for their communal support in her daily existence. She recognized the "invisible privileges" (McIntosh, 1989) that she had

enjoyed in India due to her class, caste, and race were immediately erased in Hickory Towers and replaced by access to and knowledge about resources and mobility. Drawing on her class privileges, Neerada was able to buy a car, a laptop, and sign a lease to live elsewhere in the following year, closer to her alternate Indian community of support.

Yamini was busy with her program and could not attend various social, cultural, and religious gatherings as much as Neerada. When Yamini was able to interact with her roommates, she accepted the different values and expectations her roommates had about their living conditions. At the same time Yamini returned to more traditional Indian cultural practices, one of which included learning to cook Indian food. Yamini's roommates, enjoying their belongingness in the Hickory Tower community, continued to marginalize Yamini and her living preferences. Using her class privileges, Yamini chose to pay extra rent to have her own room and bathroom. She, too, bought a laptop so that she would be able to do her work without being affected by her lack of mobility. Since Yamini's lifestyle preferences appeared more luxurious than what her roommates preferred, they continued to marginalize her through ongoing arguments and silences.

Eventually, both Neerada and Yamini decided that they did not want to "belong" in the Hickory Towers community, and would prefer to spend hours of loneliness to remaining in a community that did not respond to their interests, preferences, values, and upbringing. Belonging in Hickory Towers community meant that they would have to erase all the privileges with which they were once familiar. Since Neerada and Yamini participated in the same alternate Indian community of support, I was able to observe that in this community, they were not challenged or marginalized especially when they

authored themselves through their familiar caste, class, religious, and social status privileges.

Neerada and Yamini's dismissal and resistance to the Indian graduate student community of practice in Hickory Towers demonstrate that the social process to indoctrinate newcomers to oldtimers do not operate only within the physical space where the community is located. Instead, Yamini and Neerada both valued social practices of other physical, temporal, and imagined spaces through which they authored their selfhoods, and negotiated their privileges. Therefore absorption and indoctrination are multidirectional and rest on contingent foundations of multiple subject positions.

From transnational perspectives, Yamini and Neerada's negotiations speak to the heterogeneous and complex nature of being an Indian, and being an Indian in the U.S. Yamini and Neerada did not want to be named and defined in their transnational contexts in the way the members of Hickory Towers were authoring the NRI student community. Rejecting such references, both Yamini and Neerada were able to unbalance the power relations through which members of Hickory Towers maintained their social status and visibility amongst newcomers and other accommodating people.

Comparing Alternate Communities of Support

Both Neerada and Yamini participated in the same alternate community of support at different times during this study. This community involved a group of female Indian graduate students most of whom lived in an on-campus graduate student apartment complex. This community of practice did not maintain strong divisions between oldtimers and newcomers even when every member of the community had already

resided in the U.S. for more than three years. With blurred boundaries and borders, Yamini and Neerada found that they could be themselves, author themselves through the privileges they had in India, and they were not challenged, dismissed, or judged. Moreover, members of this community served as guides to help Neerada and Yamini navigate through many difficult moments in their everyday lives such as dealing with difficult roommates. As a community of practice, this environment offered Neerada the cultural and transnational anchoring which Hickory Towers could not. This community offered a safe space to explore racial and cultural alienation that the participants experienced in their negotiations in academia and Arborville culture in general.

The transnational location of this community of practice portrays a diasporic picture of sisterhood where the women are not bound together in the same notion of oppression. Gender worked differently for each of the women with its own limits and possibilities. If gender worked for Neerada to gain support for being a proper religious Indian girl, then gender worked differently for Yamini to be an improper Indian girl refusing an early arranged marriage. The diversity amongst these women only created a fleeting, sojourning sisterhood where complexities of the work of gender, culture, and other subject positions were the starting point of acceptance and friendship. As Falguni, one of the members of this group said, “It is what it is.”

Comparing Family visit/Memories of India

Both Neerada and Yamini remained in regular communication with their families while they were in the U.S. The families served as a space to return to imaginary/remembered (un)familiar Indian spaces. Neerada’s family reminded her to stay

grounded in her cultural and religious values even though the non-resident Indians might rework these values differently. Yamini's family visited her during the winter holidays in 2004.

Neerada's family insisted that she celebrate each religious festival on its actual day of celebration and not on the weekends. Neerada made a shrine in her room and performed elaborate rituals on a regular basis. Neerada had already lived on her own when she was in India, so for her independence was not a coveted undiscovered feeling. Neerada used her religion? independence? as a way to belong. Neerada's primary challenge during her stay was to combat her loneliness, alienation, and lack of support. It was only after seven months that she began to feel comfortable in her alternate Indian community and to use their support to combat other areas of her struggle.

On the other hand, Yamini's parents' visit was significant for two reasons. First, they were surprised by the way Yamini had domesticated herself, a role she refused to take up when she was in India. Second, they wanted to author Yamini's life through their privileges and organize an arranged marriage scenario in the U.S. or in India so that she might continue to live with the privileges with which she was once so familiar. Yamini's refusal to accept such offers demonstrated a resistance that has come out of her "becoming" (Braidotti, 1994) in the U.S. For Yamini, learning to be independent was a key discovery that informed her experiences in the U.S. Since this was her first time being away from her family, Yamini's path to independence offered her a new found confidence through which she asserted herself and made critical decisions about her life without her parents' approval.

Through Neerada's and Yamini's negotiations with their families, the concept of home became mobile with varied access contingent on time, space, and memories. The current transnational hybrid existence was hardly an informed choice for either Neerada or Yamini, so the families served as a point of return to the familiar, a place of acceptance and privilege. Through this constant shuttling and shuffling, Neerada and Yamini discovered their "becoming" in varied ways that reproduced some gendered, religious, and nationalist discourses responding to Indian cultural perspectives. In this hybrid state of movement, there was always a sense of coming and going, a gain and a loss occurring simultaneously as seen in Neerada and Yamini's production of experiences. Navigating the multiple borders of lived experiences, Neerada and Yamini charted a journey traversing memories, imagination, and desires while understanding how they need to function with shifting privileges, languages, and cultures as they identified their trajectories since they left "home."

Comparing being Non-Resident Indian in the U.S.

Being an NRI in the U.S. had different meanings for Neerada and Yamini even though they thought that their experiences in the U.S. made them more appreciative of some traditional elements of the Indian culture that they had dismissed when they were in India. Both participants reported that their sense of Indian-ness was enhanced in the U.S. However, specifically being a NRI in the U.S. varied and evolved for the participants during the course of the study, and I suspect will continue to evolve.

For Neerada, being a NRI meant not being able to practice culture and religion the same way that she was used to in India. Neerada pointed to the amplified, modified, and

distorted cultural practices as a loss of culture and regretted such loss. Guided by her family, Neerada created a traditional cultural and religious space for herself and found support amongst her female Indian friends in her alternate community. Neerada's need to anchor herself to the details of her culture and religion reflected negotiations she made with her being a non-resident Indian in the U.S. Neerada's negotiations in the U.S. were informed by the movement between the familiar and unfamiliar. Given that her experiences in formal and informal academia and in Hickory Towers were mostly unfamiliar, returning to a traditional cultural space became one of the few familiar spaces that she could anchor to author herself through some of her caste and religious privileges.

Yamini realized that not only she has to interact with Indians as a separate group of people in the U.S., but she also had to interact with the NRI community as yet another separate group based on employment status and duration of stay in the U.S. Such stratification led Yamini to identify the erasure of the privileges of social visibility, status, and class that she once enjoyed in India. Yamini was able to craft an NRI subject position for herself where she could maintain her independence, earn an income in a company that is relevant for her field, and work toward gaining the same privileges without which she was marginalized earlier by more seasoned NRI recruiters.

Both Neerada and Yamini's negotiations reveal that their cultural, religious, national, and non-resident Indian subject positions reflect a multiplicity that is permanently in flux. It was through their negotiations that Neerada and Yamini created possibilities for themselves. Through transnational feminism, understandings of these subject positions were revealed where a sense of the context and the value of the subject position while problematic categories of identity, agency, and marginal experiences were

created. While both participants refused the ghettoization of Indian women in their informal academic spaces, they both returned to a traditional space of Indian-ness which they refuted/disrupted/contradicted when playing the cultural ambassador role to their White peers. Their differences represent opportunities to discover and trace connections among multiple forms of accommodations and resistances, until those become destabilized again for new differences to emerge, thereby creating a “politics of possibilities” (Denzin, 2003).

Living in multiple cultural spaces produces responses such as adopting, adapting, refusing, returning, fleeing, with a sense of displacement and dislocation. A globalized world of multiple cultures is not inherently liberating or fulfilling despite the return to a traditional cultural and religious space. Neerada’s and Yamini’s negotiations demonstrate that constructing, modifying, and reworking a self-hood is not an isolated individualistic process but one that incorporates multiple resources and support systems such as friends, family, memories, imagination, and discursive networks that work with and against the authoring of selfhood. Whatever selfhoods Neerada and Yamini constructed not only reflect their negotiations but also portray the collective familial, national, and global construction of selfhood where “I” is constructed through the “eyes” of many.

The social process through which Neerada and Yamini place themselves in imaginary communities of practices emerged out of a sense of loss, unfamiliarity, and alienation in their everyday lives. Any selfhood construction that might have emerged out of cultural alienation or other forms of marginalization in academic or other spaces was not bound to those spaces but shifted around and out of those spaces in response to the marginalization as it reworked and reconfigured notions of selfhood. Thus, in the

“figured world of dialogism sentient beings always exist in a state of being ‘addressed’ and in the process of answering” (Holland et al., 2001, p. 169).

Arborville/U.S. culture

Surely both Neerada and Yamini had multiple negotiations in the cultural spaces of Arborville, but Yamini mentioned more salient racial and gendered aspects of this space than Note that negotiations in the U.S. cultural space are inherently embedded in many of the discussions above, but the current discussion refers to a direct attention to the Arborville cultural space through which Yamini made her future decisions about employment locations in the U.S. Yamini experienced a few racialized events in this space which reinforced her decision to work in a more cosmopolitan environment if she were to stay in the U.S.

Race was an issue that Yamini did not have to deal with when she was in India. Her cultural references to India were the best ways that she could demonstrate her unfamiliarity with such treatment. Given that Yamini stated that she wasn’t doing anything Indian, she was jogging revealed how much she had authored herself from what she perceived to be western cultural perspectives. However, when she was not treated as a western woman, her authoring and negotiations of subject positions were disrupted. Yamini soon learned that she was first seen as a racialized Other in Arborville before she was seen as anything else. Thus her decision to move to a more cosmopolitan space was a response to her anticipated fear of similar socio-cultural practices in the future if she stayed at Arborville or at a similar location.

A Note About Spaces

Although the performative spaces in Yamini's and Neerada's negotiations were clearly marked and depicted in relation to each other, in actuality these spaces existed in much more complex ways intertwined through physical, imaginary, remembered, and temporary connections. For the purpose of demonstrating such negotiations on paper, I used a simplified representational approach. However, these spaces never maintained themselves in the front and back-stage boundaries that were drawn for them. Instead, while talking about Neerada's negotiations as a non-resident Indian in the U.S., I discussed her feelings of cultural alienation in her formal and informal academic spaces. Similarly, for Yamini when discussing her later success in career fairs and networking spaces, Yamini's relationship with her advisor in the formal academic spaces became an influencing factor.

In the figured world of spaces and actors, multiple borders were crossed along race, class, culture, nationality, gender, caste, religion, and social visibilities. These border crossings were invariable, intertwined and implicated in each other, and the more I tried to disentangle them, the more entangled I became. However, for the purpose of representing on paper, the spaces were separated temporarily to demonstrate the relationship between the participants, their spaces of acts and actions, their accommodations and resistances, and the influences of contradictory discourses.

CHAPTER 7: SUBJECTS ARE STILL SPEAKING

This study first grew out of the need to implement de/colonizing epistemologies and methodologies to construct knowledge about the material conditions of women's lives in transnational existence. Globalization comes with promises of border crossing and yet simultaneously divides the world and its people into binaries like First and Third World nations, progressive and backwards promoting imperialist discourses that perpetuate an "us versus them" ordering of the world (Minh-ha, 1989; Mohanty, 1991; Spivak, 1993). Imperialist discourses affect social systems in divergent ways that lead to the favoring of certain groups of people over others. Therefore, the effects of imperialist discourses in women's lives from transnational feminist perspectives became one of the primary focuses of the study.

Specifically, the purpose of the study was two-fold: substantive and methodological. Substantively, this research focused on examining how two female Indian graduate students who have been in the USA for no more than 1.5 years negotiate their initial experiences while pursuing their education. Methodologically, this study explored how research can be informed utilizing decolonizing theoretical and methodological frameworks of transnational feminism and postcolonialism. Specific research questions that guided this study included:

1. What relations and practices are enabled by the material and discursive conditions of transnationalism and how, in turn, do the two female Indian graduate students construct/maintain/dismiss subject positions within those relations and practices?

2. What expectations do the two female Indian graduate students retain from their Indian upbringing? What expectations do they discard or modify? How do female Indian graduate students conceptualize their modification of expectations?
3. How do the two female Indian graduate students conceptualize their academic experiences (e.g. classroom experiences, relationships with advisors, expectations for performance, the understanding of their role as graduate assistants, and interaction with other students and people of diverse backgrounds, etc.)
4. As a transnational researcher studying other transnationals, how do I incorporate decolonizing methodologies in my research? What deliberate moves can I make to decolonize my work? What are the limits of possibilities of decolonizing methodologies, given my colonized education and upbringing?

The participants' short duration in the U.S. became an enabling factor to focus on how their new-found "minoritized" positions revealed oppressive relations and practices of "worlding." Being informed by de/colonizing epistemologies, this study continuously interrogated colonizing assumptions while acknowledging that colonizing and de/colonizing epistemologies work simultaneously to inform this study. Consequently, this study interrogated binaries and disrupted essentialized understanding of race, culture, ethnicity, community, nationality, oppression, and liberation and resistance.

De/colonizing epistemologies also played an integral role in informing methodology in terms of research questions, design, data collection, analysis, and representation.

Designed as a case study to represent the socio-cultural negotiations of two female Indian transnational graduate students in the U.S., tangible data collection involved conversations, participant observations, photo- and object-elicited

conversations, along with researcher journals and reflections. Data collection also included attending to other tacit forms of information (thoughts, emotions, serendipitous conversations, watching movies, etc.) that shaped the understanding of the more tangible forms of information in this study. The data transformation process included reading through the data, listening to tapes repeatedly, and writing around multiple ideas presented in the data. The participants played an integral, collaborative role in terms of authoring their self-description portraits and lending their support to data analysis and representation. Based on the relationships established through our shared cultural understandings and my insider-outsider position, the participants became personally invested in the study.

Using and extending Goffman's (1997) visual of front and back stage, the data re-presented in plays offered a multidimensional understanding, illustrating events, interactions, and negotiations in relations to the time(s) and space(s) in which they occurred. The front and back stage formation allowed presentations of relational aspects of negotiations revealing possible tensions, contradictions, silences, influences, expectations, and values that shaped the performative acts and actions in those spaces.

Major Findings and Implications

There are three major substantive and methodological findings in this study. These findings provide answers to the first three questions in an integrated form. The substantive findings include i) re-conceptualizing relationships with home, ii) establishing belongingness as a function of membership in communities of practice, and iii) authoring self-hood through shift of privileges. The methodological findings include:

i) posturing in qualitative research and constructing knowledge, ii) Exploring the roles of native researcher and ethics, and iii) legitimizing alternate epistemologies

Re-conceptualizing relationships with home

Neerada and Yamini re-conceptualized how they thought of themselves as Indians and non-resident Indians in the U.S. These thoughts were informed by their multiple experiences and negotiations in formal and informal academic spaces, spaces where they interacted with other Indians in the U.S, and spaces where they interacted with their parents.

For Neerada, interactions in formal and informal academic spaces informed her of how people saw her as an Indian in the U.S. anchoring to and fleeing from cultural expectations. She shuttled between not wanting to be an ambassador for India and wanting to contradict stereotypical understanding of India and Indian women. In her interactions with other Indians in the Hickory Towers community, Neerada realized that her way of being an Indian is different from those of the members in the Hickory Towers community. Moreover, as Neerada communicated with her parents, she created a space of remembered and imagined India. Consequently, Neerada shuttled to more traditional cultural and religious practices to enhance her Indian-ness in the U.S. In such movement, Neerada interrogated what it meant to be a female Indian in the U.S. or a female minority in the U.S for the first time in her life.

For Yamini, interactions in formal and informal academia exposed her to people of multiple cultural backgrounds. Yamini began to understand these cultures in reference to her own, thereby enhancing her Indian-ness. Furthermore, in her living community,

Yamini realized that her sense of Indian-ness was different from that of the members of the Hickory Towers community. Her general interactions with people in the U.S. made her realize that they did not see Yamini as someone who had a westernized upbringing. Rather, their perception of Yamini being from a backwards country also made her interrogate further what it meant to be an Indian in the U.S. Yamini's experiences with some non-resident Indian recruiters informed her of the different ways Indians author themselves in the U.S. business market field. Furthermore, her interactions with her parents and their dismissal of the U.S. being the coveted space for opportunities engaged her in conversations about being an Indian in the U.S. Yamini identified that in India she did not have to interact with Indians as a separate group and through such interactions in the U.S. her understanding of being an Indian changed. With the lack of Indian cultural relations and practices that she enjoyed in India, Yamini began to crave everything that she once dismissed as uncool in India, like Indian food, movies, and music.

Therefore, both Neerada and Yamini demonstrated a changed relationship with home, resulting in a nostalgic sense of India that returned them to traditional cultural relations and practices that they did not take up when they were in India. Their negotiations support the theoretical literature in transnational feminism that states through constant shuttling between various contradictory subject positions, people construct an evolving sense of national and ethnic selfhood (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; Visweswaran, 1993). The literature in transnational feminism informed by postcolonialism identifies the recognition of:

Third World women as multiply aligned historical subjects only if we re-describe "historical actors" in such a way that acknowledges the many social relations in

which selfhood is constituted, the consequent heterogeneity within identity groups and the possibility for strategic alignment with varying social groups. (Stone-Mediatore, 2003, p. 136)

In other words, the participants were able to construct their self-hood as they defined an evolving relationship with what they once considered home through interactions, resistances, and strategic alignments with social groups that reminded them of what it meant to be an Indian in the U.S. Specifically, Sarah Lamb's (2002) study of Indian transnationals in the U.S. demonstrates similar nostalgia and enhanced Indian-ness as part of negotiating living in the U.S. for the first time.

This study contributes to the existing literature supporting a sense of altered selfhood that incorporates influences from multiple contesting cultural relations and practices, akin to Anzaldua's (1987/1999) "mestiza" consciousness. Furthermore, this study extends the existing literature by demonstrating the specific spaces, actors, time, and performances that inform such evolving conceptualizations of home, nation, and cultural identities. As we live in a globalized world, relationships between people and nation become primary sites for investigating hegemonic effects of the new world order.

This study complicates the notions of a "pure" home culture because the participants were raised with hybridized eastern and western cultural perspectives. Such hybridized upbringing became reworked in the U.S. cultural space of Arborville and higher education where the participants were constantly reminded of their exotic, backwards cultural identities. Consequently, Neerada and Yamini began to re-evaluate the meaning of home, culture, their Indian-ness, and their minority status only to return to a traditional notion of a "home" culture as a way to remain anchored and to belong

amidst shifting subjectivities. These conflicting understandings of home expose racial, cultural, and national inequalities in the U.S. By being “Indianized” in unfamiliar ways, Neerada and Yamini opted for an authoring that was embedded with the richness of Indian culture and tradition even though such authoring carried restrictive gendered expectations. For example, being traditional for Yamini meant that she would learn to cook, a task that she refused to do when she was in India, thereby aligning with more modern and class-based Indian discourses. Neerada’s and Yamini’s return to a traditional “home” culture exceeds physical, temporal or remembered understanding of home. Instead, this study demonstrates that home and understanding of home culture can be an imagined excess from multiple discourses informing the participants.

The implications for this finding reside in how a home culture is conceptualized by those in transnational exile. The conceptualization of a home culture is contingent on interactions, experiences, tensions, and contradictions in various spaces which contribute to the continuously evolving relationship with home. Therefore, for future research, understanding a home culture and relationship with the home culture for a transnational need to be plotted with the production of experiences in multiple spaces, the transnationals’ negotiations in those spaces, and the multiplicities through which home and selfhood can be remembered, imagined, and reinvented that exceed their physical and temporal realities. These understandings need to be more than permanently deferred to contingent foundations. These understandings need to be mapped on to multiple socio-cultural discourses to expose the factors that maintain and perpetuate social injustices.

Belongingness Is a Function of Membership in Communities of Practice

Neerada and Yamini grappled with their needs to belong in various communities of practices, including their living community, the Hickory Towers, which is an alternate Indian community, communities in formal and informal academia and in their imagined and remembered communities in India. Communities of practices are generally designed to indoctrinate the newcomer through legitimate peripheral participation as they gradually become oldtimers in the community (Lave & Wenger, 2003). Both Neerada and Yamini demonstrated that belongingness in a community goes beyond sharing similar characteristics with the members of the community. Neither Yamini nor Neerada maintained their memberships in the Hickory Tower community as they found that being Indian is not a homogenous understanding. The members of Hickory Tower understood being Indian in ways that erased the privileges with which Neerada and Yamini authored themselves. Thus, even though both the participants were new and had the promise of belonging in a community that looked and sounded culturally and nationally similar to their own, Neerada's and Yamini's rejections of membership demonstrate their efforts to balance power relations in their favor even if that meant a lack of belongingness in the community.

The communities of practices in which Neerada and Yamini participated did not comprise distinct oldtimer and newcomer membership roles. These communities blurred such binaries and created a democratic form of membership. This form of belongingness and indoctrination deviates from Lave and Wenger's (2003) conceptualization of legitimate peripheral participation where a newcomer's participation is not always

contingent on indoctrination by oldtimers, but on ways that membership in the community can speak to the values and expectations of newcomers.

These communities of practices lent support to both Neerada and Yamini as they navigated through higher education in the U.S during their first year. Existing research on international students demonstrate the critical role of a support system for international students. Although the earlier research on international students argues the value of support in “assimilating” students into the mainstream U.S. culture (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Anderson, 1994; Baker & Siryk, 1984; Birbili, 2000; Feng, 1991), later studies identified other support systems to assist in the transitional process of being an international student in the U.S. (Conner, 1985; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kagan & Cohen, 1990).

This study contributes to the existing literature by extending the discussion on support systems for international students through the introduction of communities of practices that can assist with resisting unbalanced power relations, with negotiating various forms of invisibilities in higher education, and with accessing resources. Both Neerada and Yamini participated in such communities of practices where they received support for their resistances and accommodations. Neerada’s experiences of marginalization in her academic community of practice left her with feelings of cultural alienation and loneliness. Through her alternate Indian community of support, Neerada was able to exercise her agency when she resisted against one professor’s disrespectful behavior through silence and body language and when she refused to accept her advisor’s lack of willingness to let her visit India. Similarly, Yamini’s community of practice

formed by her peers offered her the support she needed as she dealt with issues of invisibility with some of her domestic peers.

Therefore, the implications in these findings refer to the critical role membership in certain communities of practice can play in being a support system for resistances against oppressive relations and practices. Moreover, another implication is that membership roles are challenged in communities of practices where unequal power balances function to keep people at the margin. Besides, membership is not limited to belonging to a group that shares similar characteristics, ethnicity, looks, or religion. Rather, belongingness is contingent on factors like values, expectations, support, privileges, and preferences. Thus, for future research purposes, any community of practice should be analyzed on what it seems to offer and how new members negotiate that offer based on their needs to understand membership roles. From a transnational feminist perspective, communities of practice lending assistance to international students should be analyzed in terms of the support they provide to little known acts of struggle.

Implications for practice involve creating and maintaining multiple communities of support in higher education for international students traversing formal and informal academic spaces. Moreover, communities of support cannot be those that only offer international days, street festivals, and orientation activities. While important, these events do not change status quo, and uneven power relations continue to permeate various spaces in which the international students have to function. So, while integrating diversity at a recreational level in higher education is helpful, what would be more responsive to the needs of international students is a commitment from administrators,

professors, to incorporate changes at structural level so that multiple perspectives and preferences are legitimately accommodated.

Authoring self-hood through shift of privileges

Neerada and Yamini's negotiations are marked by the shifts in privileges as they moved from a familiar space of privileges to an unfamiliar space where class, caste, religion, social status and visibility were entirely erased. The erasure of such privileges made Neerada and Yamini more sensitive to the salient nature of the loss of their privileges as they identified cultural and racial stereotypes, their feelings of alienation in different spaces, and various other oppressive practices with which they were unfamiliar. In several spaces, both Neerada and Yamini experienced being thrust to subject positions with which they had no identification, such as being a cook for Yamini or being someone from a backwards space for Neerada. Through their experiences of being "raced," "colonized," "Othered," "internationalized," "resisted," and "supported,"⁷³ Neerada and Yamini authored themselves by shuttling back and forth between familiar and unfamiliar spaces to negotiate their understandings of race, culture, nationality, belongingness, and of being a good student, an international student, an Indian, and of being non-resident Indian in the U.S. Examples of how Yamini and Neerada have been "raced," "nationalized," and "Othered" could be found in Neerada's assertion, "I feel like I am from a backwards country..." or in Yamini's assertion, "I was not doing anything Indian, I was doing something American, I was jogging."

⁷³ I put all of these terms in quotes because of the specific ways they operated in the participants' lives to avoid making generalized arguments stemming from essentialization.

Moreover, Yamini and Neerada had to deal with an altered class status which was also an erasure of a privilege they enjoyed in India. However, Yamini and Neerada continued to author themselves from their privileged class status that they enjoyed in India. Both of them identified more with their past class status and their anticipated future class status to author themselves accordingly to their current class status. Their connection to their past class status remained strong as they either received resources (laptop for Neerada) or had parents visit them (Yamini) in the U.S. Neerada and Yamini resisted authoring themselves in terms of loss of class privileges and identified their class position as a temporary halt reflecting their student status in the U.S. However, refusal to attach significant authoring to loss of class privileges does not dismiss the material realities of their everyday life that they had to deal with in regards to their class status, including lack of mobility, lack of better housing, and lack of access to multiple resources. However, these realities did not affect the way Yamini and Neerada positioned themselves. They refused to be classed according to their graduate student status.

Additionally, through the shifts of privileges, Yamini and Neerada also practiced multiple acts of resistances. These acts of resistances were sometimes in silence, through body languages, and sometimes voiced. Keeping in mind hooks' and Lorde's and other de/colonizing resistance strategists' reminders, I see Yamini and Neerada's resistances and accommodations merged at times leading to co-optation. For example, Yamini learned to cook but refused to invite some of her peers who rendered her invisible. Therefore, she exercised personal power and accommodated to one subject position while resisting another. Similarly, Neerada felt proud that the trendiness of her outfit did not render India as a backwards country, but at the same time it exoticised her when a

professor marked her outfit as a cultural specimen. In both instances accommodations and resistances worked simultaneously. These findings support the de/colonizing resistance strategists when they call for alternate ways of re-conceptualizing power, liberation, oppression, or resistance in order to avoid being co-opted and to open possibilities that defy normative structural assumptions.

Furthermore, these findings contribute to the existing literature of multiplicity of subject positions amongst which transnationals shuttle to author themselves (Alexander, 1991; Braidotti, 1991; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Minh-ha, 1989), thereby disrupting any universalized notions of race, culture, ethnicity, nationality, or gender. The literature in this area calls for analyzing gender beyond race and class categories. This study contributes to the transnational feminist literature by extending this argument and demonstrating that gender can be analyzed from spaces where experiences are produced and from the movement between multiple spaces of production of experiences. It is in those movements and desires to occupy certain spaces, desirable and undesirable effects of social structures can be detected as was detected in the movements between class status and the movements between accommodations and resistances.

The implication for this finding is that shifts in privileges become critical sites for identifying hegemonic local and global practices that affect the material conditions of transnationals' lived experiences. The shift of privileges marks cultural stereotypes and creates further gaps between cultures. These stereotypes are not unidirectional but indicative of differences, specificities, privileges, and power relations and how they function with each other sometimes to maintain distances between people and increase cultural gaps.

Both Neerada and Yamini crossed multiple borders in various spaces based on their shifting privileges and contesting subject positions. For example, Neerada crossed borders as she attempted to build bridges between different racial groups in her department. Yamini crossed the borders that her father drew for her in terms of employment and arranged marriage to pursue what she perceived to be a life of independence. Border crossings occurred on individual, local, and global levels that constructed selfhood for the participants. On local and global levels border crossings demonstrated how Yamini and Neerada constructed self-hood based on their understanding and negotiations of race, class, nationality, and minority and international student status, amongst other subject positions. On a global level border crossings included forming multiple alliances with people from other cultures, disrupting previously held notions of Indian expectations and values, and disrupting expected values in the U.S., and developing a new sense of Indian-ness integrating expectations from U.S. and Indian cultural perspectives. Apart from constructing selfhoods, these border crossings constructed Yamini and Neerada's perceptions of themselves in terms of their relationship with India and the U.S. which were mostly in flux.

These findings support the literature that purports dissolving First and Third World boundaries, creating borderless feminisms, and multidirectional global movement of people and culture (Basu, 1995; Chatterjee, 2002; Lowe, 1994). Moreover, these findings of constructing selfhood through border crossing and forming relations with nations put a critical gaze on higher education and on transnationals who work in higher education as implications for practice. Transnational scholars and professionals in higher education must engage in critical dialogues about the commodification of

multiculturalism in higher education and how it remains a reflection of the society in which it is situated. Studies in higher education examining practices of higher education informed by power relations of globalization as experienced by any other group of international students could depict the slippery rhetoric and practices of higher education. With more studies like this, spaces can be opened up to question roles, policies and practices of higher education in the U.S. at local, national, and global levels.

The following section discusses the methodological findings and implications of this study. The answer to question four is embedded throughout in this study. Methodological findings described below contribute to answering the fourth research question.

Posturing in qualitative and constructing knowledge

Informed by de/colonizing methodologies, the colonizing nature of posturing in qualitative research can construct knowledge from imperialistic perspectives while muting the voice of the subaltern completely (Smith, 1999; Spivak, 1993). De/colonizing research attempts to depart from some colonizing assumptions in research in order to construct knowledge from alternate perspectives that have not been heard well or at all historically.

Informed by Visweswaran's (1994) call for abandoning authority and the impossibility in doing so, this study was designed between the tensions of mitigating researcher authority and creating spaces where the participants could author themselves into existence in this study. As explained in Chapter 3, I questioned the researcher's will to know and the knowledge produced using the presumptive agency of the researcher.

Therefore, attempting to abandon some of that will to know meant not having specific questions for conversation, inviting participants to author their descriptions in their own chapters, and distancing myself from theoretical interpretations that were incommensurable with the participants' understanding of their experiences. Abandoning will to know and knowing the impossibility of that posture produces different kinds of results than structured open-ended questions. Both elicit performatory acts but one is more overtly driven by the researcher's will to know and the other is a willingness to abandon such will to know and acknowledge participants' agency in their performative acts and actions. Moreover, abandoning some of the will to know allowed me to hear negotiations that were prompted by the participants' needs of expression. Such abandonment of "will to know" does not imply that the researcher is unfocused gathering meaningless data, but rather the data gathered is not prompted through researcher's questions but gathered through the participant's negotiation of performances she wanted to author for herself in order to represent her life experiences.

This finding supports Smith's(1999) and Spivak's (1993) work where colonizing assumptions were questioned and knowledge was produced from a messy, tension-filled space yet creating possibilities for the subaltern to author herself in new ways. This study contributes further to de/colonizing methodologies by arguing for unstructured, unplanned conversations to discover saliency of acts and actions that the participants want to share unprompted. Furthermore, this study coins the researcher's colonizing assumptions as "presumptive agency" and disrupts that agency so that construction of knowledge occurs from the cracks of presumptive agency. In other words, holding any methodology or epistemology as foundational and a "regime of truth" is not an option in

de/colonizing research. Certain frameworks and epistemologies had to be temporarily fixed for use in this study, which becomes another contribution to de/colonizing methodologies because it demonstrates what research might look like when some of the foundational frameworks fall apart but yet are held together to construct knowledge and understanding about participants' lived experiences.

The implication for this finding is the recognition that abandonment of a will to know is an impossibility, yet interrogating colonizing assumptions is a necessity. When the impossibility and the necessity collide in qualitative research, knowledge constructs need to be evaluated in its limits and potentials utilizing and questioning theoretical frameworks. Hence, findings re-presented from these negotiations should always be suspect. The vigilance with which Smith and Spivak urge researchers to question their colonizing assumptions can be informative for qualitative research in depicting alternate epistemologies and negotiations. Thus, to use de/colonizing epistemologies and methodologies in research is to be prepared to break apart previous understandings, to be in the middle of the debris of what used to be canonical, and to be willing to start over again several times from the middle.

Roles of a native researcher and ethics

Being a native researcher meant not only questioning my transnational subjectivities but shuttling between contested loyalties (Chaudhury, 2000; Mohanty, 2004; Visweswaran, 1994). In other words, I was an insider researcher, and my relationship with the participants soon developed into a friendship and grew into a relationship of being an elder sister. On the other hand, I was a researcher with an

academic gaze over the entire process of collecting information. The membership in the community soon became a relationship that was more valued than my role as a researcher. This meant that I was first an elder sister before a researcher, i.e. if participants left the research, we would still maintain our kinship relations with equal fervor. Making the participants ends to themselves and not means to my academic ends meant the ethics with which I had to consider interpretation and representation of the data were always filtered by being an elder sister first.

This study contributes to the existing literature by supporting the argument about contested loyalties and the blurring of the boundaries between the researcher and the researched as put forth by Minh-ha (1989), Behar (1993), and Visweswaran (1994). This study further contributes to discussions of insider-outsider research from de/colonizing perspectives by outlining the ethical implications arising from such positioning.

Being a native researcher meant quick access, rapport, and trust building for me. With the participants' trust and full access to information, I constantly checked with the participants for their approval even though I already had their consent in verbal and written forms. The burden of ethics caused me to conduct several member checks which increased Neerada and Yamini's investment in the study. Without an interested and integrated participation from Neerada and Yamini, this study would have been further removed from their perspectives than where it resides currently.

Due to our close interactions the participants disagreed with my transnational feminist interpretations of the data. My decision to explain concepts of my framework along with choosing portions of the data with which the participants were most comfortable rested on the de/colonizing methodologies that support multiple border

crossings which can speak to the realities constructed out of the material conditions of the participants' lives. I did not want to create a body of knowledge in transnational feminism where the participants' voices were knowingly muted. If the people with whom I worked do not understand my interpretation and significance of such interpretations, then how can I expect to affect social change and integrate this scholarship in multiple academic and non-academic spaces to avoid ghettoization of South Asians?

Therefore, member checks producing disagreements should be sites of methodological inquiry to identify gaps in theory and practice in order to increase the rigor of qualitative research. Through a collaborative approach to interpretation and authoring, both the participants and I were able to produce information that spoke most directly to the realities of the material conditions of their lives. With the burden of being a native researcher emerged the realization that the primary audience for/with whom I write this study has to be a South Asian audience so that the accountability of this work goes through an insider academic and folk gaze first before an outsider academic gaze.

Hence, native researchers are always going to be at contested intersections through/with/against which they have to design a path for their research. If this path is designed with multiple de/colonizing epistemologies which incorporate the gaze of the people with whom the researcher works as the primary one, then knowledge produced from this negotiation is differently responsive to the people who are authored in the research.

Legitimizing alternate epistemologies

To create spaces for alternate epistemologies meant breaking established binaries through research design, data analysis, and representation. Disrupted binaries included oppression and liberation, colonizing and decolonizing epistemologies, eastern and western cultures, researcher and researched, self and other, and voice and silence. By being on the constant lookout for such binaries that inform research practices, one can begin to question the foundational assumptions, break them apart, and create space for alternate possibilities so that something else can happen.

Calls for creating alternate epistemologies from various de/colonizing spaces are the predominant theme in de/colonizing discourses (Alexander, 1991; Brah, 1996; Britzman, 1995; Chow, 1993; Lorde, 1984). Using a representative form of front and back stage to create a space for alternate epistemologies, participants' negotiations were expressed on multiple dimensions (i.e. text, picture, body language, field notes, and relationships and negotiations between spaces). However such depictions were not without their limitations. The truth is that these spaces weren't discrete and the negotiations were not always informed solely by the discursive space in which they were presented. Moreover, multiple front and back stage relationships existed and continued to exist, which were not possible to demonstrate in two-dimensional mostly linear interpretation of data. Therefore, any interpretation out of such negotiation should always be suspect at some levels.

Looking towards alternate framework to make sense of the world and its people, I argued for understanding and analyzing data from sites of multiplicity and complexity by

returning to Indian Vedic philosophy of *Om Tat Sat*, meaning that which exists, or more colloquially as stated by one of the participants, “It is what it is.” If the world is messy, experiences are contradictory, then to understand that messiness meant starting, remaining, and representing that messiness in all aspects of research in order to capture the tensions and complexities of the participants’ negotiations. So while front and back stage representations demonstrated a two-stage relationship, the truth is that relationships exist on multiple physical and imagined stages. There exist complex negotiations, multiple forms of access to different spaces, and expectations. The more of these aspects can be understood, integrated, and represented while acknowledging the impossibility of understanding, capturing, and representing without various forms of mitigation and gate keeping, the more ensures quality and rigor in qualitative studies will be assured.

This study contributes to the existing call for alternate epistemologies in the literature by attempting to create representational spaces from where such epistemologies can be constructed. This is not to imply that other methods could not have arrived at the same conclusion. However, since this study actively employed de/colonizing strategies, the effect of such strategies can then become of value, susceptible to analysis and fertile ground for deconstruction so that further knowledge can be created by rupturing the borders within which this study remains confined.

Apart from specific methodological implications and practices, this study is situated within the current discourses of scientific inquiry that privileges experimental research. Although I did not craft this study to be in direct opposition to experimental research, the current trend towards positivist standards of scientific inquiry begs a discussion about scientific inquiry and qualitative research. Any regulated normalizing of

research that privileges one way of knowing over others should be suspect in its acts and intentions. Dismissing multiple ways of knowing is akin to dismissing people's lives: their realities, sufferings, and accomplishments.

I will not repeat arguments previously made by other researchers that challenge the trend toward a reduction of epistemologies, a monolithic understanding of truth, and a fear and consequent backlash against the proliferation of diverse forms of qualitative inquiry in educational research (Bloch, 2004; Flannery, 2001; Lather, 2004; Popkewitz, 2004; St. Pierre, 2002; St. Pierre, 2004). I align with those who value the kind of scientific inquiry which opens up spaces that “work” with the potentials and pitfalls of various ways of knowing and understanding the world. According to Lincoln and Cannella (2004):

Although experimental studies can and do produce some knowledge worth having, in some kinds of contexts, such studies are singularly ill suited to examining the complex and dynamic contexts of public education in its many forms, sites, and variations, especially considering the farrago of subtle social difference produced by gender, race, ethnicity, linguistic status, or class. Indeed, multiple kinds of knowledge, produced by multiple epistemologies and methodologies, are not only worth having but also demanded if policy, legislation, and practice are to be sensitive to social needs. (p. 7)

Thus, while experimental research is canonized as the “gold standard” for producing scientific knowledge, it fails to capture the complexities of lived reality, produced by the interactions of various systems of oppression that lead to gendered, raced, classed, and otherwise marginalized experiences. Without epistemologies and

methodologies to understand the world and its people in diverse terms, certain groups of people will continue to enjoy unequal power relations and their associated privileges. Therefore, this research attempts to disrupt social structures that preserve the status quo in higher education. This study exposes the ways in which higher education integrates (read: assimilate) international students into the U.S. curriculum, thereby demonstrating the shortcomings of Euro-American education.

Higher education operates within a global marketplace, attracting a large number of foreign-born students to the U.S. Once they arrive in the U.S., however, these students are trained largely from Euro-American perspectives, which dismiss their earlier ways of knowing. For example, Yamini and Neerada learned the U.S. ways of understanding research and science, and doing business. Such proliferation of Euro-American discourses continues to set up specific cultural norms as referents for others and dismisses multiple epistemologies.

This study also has implications for social relations between U.S. and India. Given the current state of the world, building bridges and enhancing understanding between cultures is a far better strategy than indoctrinating students of non-Western cultures into Euro-American ways of viewing the world. This research opens up possibilities for multi-pronged coalitions, resistance movements, and support systems for international students, all of which can be threatening to established andro- and ethnocentric practices of Western academia. For this reason, research conducted to challenge the status quo of higher education in the U.S. is important in terms of exposing the gendered, patriarchal, and colonial structures that maintain, regulate, and normalize divisions between dominant and marginalized individuals and groups.

Moreover, it is necessary to deconstruct the current understanding of “scientific” to create counterdiscourses of scientific inquiry that do not hold quantitative criteria as benchmarks for qualitative or *all* scientific research. For example, Lincoln and Cannella (2004, p. 10) argue that the binary between “objective” and “subjective” research is reified, and that objectivity does not exist in *any* experimental research as all research reflects personal interests, political influences, and fiscal impacts. Furthermore, Lincoln and Canella (2004, p. 180) state, “Objectivity has become a weapon and a shield. It is a weapon when it is evoked to discredit some forms of research as sloppy, nonrigorous, partisan, advocacy oriented, biased, or subjective. It is a shield when marshaled as a defense against multiculturalism, or equity-oriented approaches to providing equal educational opportunity.”

Adhering to such unattainable standards of objectivity would negate the efforts of researchers who work from the margin to advance social justice and equality. Researchers who work for social justice and equity issues may threaten legislators and administrators because they challenge foundational understandings of truth, reality, rationality, common sense, nature, culture, race, gender, etc., while opening up spaces for possibilities of change, alternate politics, and contingent understandings. Because such attacks on foundational understandings incorporate calls for reform, policy and legislation changes, and other forms of organized resistance, the dominant group(s) are forced to sit up and pay attention to the normalization of hegemonic practices that promote inequalities among people at local, national, and global levels.

Furthermore, the discussion in the National Research Council (NRC) report proposed that scientific inquiry should be able “to describe the physical and social world

scientifically so that, for example, multiple observers can agree on what they see” (NRC, 2002, p. 25). However, such a characterization of scientific inquiry leads to a superficial understanding of complex issues such as race, class, caste, gender, and the politics of location that affect people diversely in their lives. Hence, this study attempted to highlight those diversities, not to anticipate agreements of any kind, but to question established ways of understanding and to create possibilities that can address issues of social inequalities. Seeing the participants’ negotiations and production of experiences through a lens of universalized understanding would be un-seeing them and silencing whatever is left of their mitigated voices in this study, and would be an unethical, co-opted act violating the expectations of care and concern practiced in various spaces of educational research.

My goal, as a transnational feminist researcher, was to capture the material conditions of two Indian women’s everyday lives in the U.S. and discuss the effects of normative socio-cultural discourses on these lives. Therefore, if the goal is to capture certain aspects of reality in as much details and complexity as possible in order to understand, deconstruct, reconstruct, and open up possibilities that challenge social systems of inequalities, then I am compelled to integrate epistemologies and methodologies that are sensitive in honoring the complex and intertwined nature of the participants’ experiences.

Reducing these participants to universally agreeable categories would have been impossible. Whose knowledge do I use as a benchmark to set up anticipated agreements? To whom do I look to anticipate head nods? Whose science do I borrow? Whose science is a “legitimate science” for understanding the production and negotiation of the

participants' experiences? Whom do I silence when I align with what is deemed "scientific" in current discourses that attempt to regulate ways of knowing? As Sandra Harding argues:

Critiques of Eurocentrism by African scholars, African-American philosophers, African-American feminists, and Third World writers have brought into focus the importance of considering on whose questions of Western sciences, philosophy, and social studies of sciences (including feminist ones) have centered the necessity of historicizing "science," "women," and "feminism." (Harding, 1991, p. viii)

Being a native researcher in Western academia is a complicated position to be in if the goal is to disrupt certain imperialistic Western assumptions about knowledge, inquiry, and science. Thus, Harding (1991) suggests:

We need a more complex understanding of how the development of Western sciences and models of knowledge are embedded in and have advanced the development of Western society and culture but have also led to the simultaneous de-development and continual re-creation of "others" – Third world peoples, women, the poor, nature. Science and knowledge will always be deeply permeated by the social relations through which they come into existence, but it is contemporary social relations that create and recreate science and knowledge today. The sciences that gain world ascendancy in the future are unlikely to be so distinctively Western and androcentric as are the dominant tendencies today. (p. ix)

Harding's suggestion clearly points to scientific inquiry that interrogates the use of andro- and ethnocentric Western discourses in order to create liberatory possibilities for people who have been constructed and re-constructed as cultural Others. Scientific inquiry, in its current form, is derived from the hard (imperialistic) sciences that are proclaimed to be the benchmark of academic rigor and trustworthiness. However, as Harding states, we need a broader understanding of science and scientific inquiry in order to respond to the diversity of the world and its people instead of (re)producing them in Westernized images. To develop a broader understanding of science and scientific inquiry, the current discourses proliferated by the NRC need to be challenged and interrogated continuously to expose the many pitfalls and gaps embedded in those monolithic ideologies.

Scientific inquiry that employs qualitative methodologies examines the iterative relationship between epistemologies, theoretical framework, research design, data analysis, and re-presentations and offers limits and possibilities of various ways of knowing/understanding the world. Implications for practice include exercising care, caution, and vigilance in making decisions in research as the researcher aligns with certain theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Aligning with transnational feminism allowed me to integrate serendipitous ways of collecting data in order to capture the saliency of the material conditions of the participants' lives. Hence, when I had to make decisions about re-presentations, employing a multidimensional framework demonstrated the complexities of the participants' realities that exceeded a flattened textual re-presentation connecting and juxtaposing multiple data sources. Employing techniques like photo- and object-elicited conversations also allowed insights that serendipitous

conversations did not, thereby creating multiple sources of information. Participants' negotiations were re-presented in performative acts--their private and public narratives--not to support any specific ideology or to pit one ideology against another, but to show participant- and researcher-negotiated ways of seeing the material conditions in the lives of transnational students.

This research resists the positivist framing of scientific inquiry and privileges the rigor of academic research that takes on the complicated task of analyzing how the intertwined relationships of various ideological discourses call for social changes. This study challenges such "worlding" effects that produce people in imperialistic and colonized subject positions. If globalization of education is supposed to promote an exchange of knowledge, this study demonstrates that this intended "exchange" is occurring primarily in one direction. Such unidirectional exchanges continue to restrict people's ways of knowing and understanding and thwart the possibilities of genuine, multidirectional exchanges of knowledge and cultural understandings.

I propose that people need not always agree about findings and interpretations for educational research to be scientific. Instead, if educational research opens up spaces for dialogues, multiple ways of knowing, and collaborative learning across paradigms, we might get a better picture of "what works" than the current moves to purge databases of research that does not align with the U.S. administration's agendas. To that end, we need methodologies that depart from colonized ways of knowing and measuring the world, its people, their actions, and their experiences to avoid further inscription in imperialistic terms.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Draft of Email Soliciting Participants

I am conducting a research study to explore the life experiences of female Indian graduate students in USA to identify and address the issues that affect their everyday lives. For this study I am looking for 2 female volunteer participants who have been in USA for no more than 1.5 years. It will be ideal if one student's program of study is not in the sciences. Participants should be fluent in English and preference will be given to at least one participant who can speak in Bengali.

For participating in the study, volunteers would be compensated with twenty-five dollar gift certificates from the university bookstore and invitation to two lunches and dinners. Moreover I will be able to guide the participants to various on-campus and local resources according to the participants' needs as they pursue higher education in USA.

This study will be for six months starting in August 2004 and ending in January 2005. Participants will be expected to engage in informal conversational interviews and allow me to observe them in their home and academic environments. I will be visiting the participants in their homes at least 2-3 times per week during the period of this study. I will be observing the participants in their classes for no more than 4 times during the study period. If interested, please contact Kakali Bhattacharya for further information at Kakali@uga.edu or 706-542-5740.

Appendix B: Draft of Email to Professors Seeking Permission to Observe Participants

Dear Professor:

I am a doctoral student in Educational Psychology conducting a dissertation study on the life experiences of international female Indian graduate students in higher education in USA (IRB #: 2005-10034-0). It would be beneficial for this study if I could observe _____ (insert name of the participant) in your class _____ (insert class details). I will only document my participant's behavior and not provide any detailed information of either you or any other students in the class. I anticipate being in your class for no more than 4 times during the semester. Please let me know if you are comfortable with my presence in your class. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at 542-5740 or Kakali@uga.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Appendix C: Taking Stock, Data Inventory

September 2004 – January 2005

Number of conversations completed – October – February		Time spent in each conversation
With Yamini		
▪ 5 non-photo elicited one-on-one conversations		5 x 60 minutes = 300 minutes
With Neerada		
▪ 6 informal and phone conversations at either Neerada's home or at a outdoor park, or in a coffee shop. (some conversations lasted 90 minutes, so that takes into account the shorter phone conversations)		6 x 60 minutes = 360 minutes
Number of pages of conversation transcripts		Total number of pages
Yamini		
▪ Approx. 15 pages of transcript per conversation		15 pages x 5 conversations = 75
Neerada		
Various length of pages	total	= 50
	total	125
Number of photo elicited conversations		Time spent in each conversation
Yamini		
▪ 5 photo elicited conversations		5x 60 minutes = 300 minutes
Neerada		
▪ 7 photo elicited conversations		7 x 60 minutes = 420 minutes
Number of pages of photo elicited transcripts		Total Number of pages
Yamini		
▪ Approx. 1 page per 2 pages of photos		20/2 = 10 pages
Neerada		
▪ Approx. 1 page per 2 pages of photos		44/2 = 22 pages
	total	32 pages

Number of Participant Observations/group conversations Conducted	Time spent in each observation
Yamini ▪ 5 events (Saraswati Pujo 2 dinners, lunch, and book discussion)	3 hrs = 180 minutes (dinner) 1 hr = 60 minutes (lunch) 2 hrs = 120 minutes (discussion)
Neerada ▪ 10 events (garba, 2 picante dinners, 2 Raima visits, 1 Saraswati pujo, 1 car ride, 2 shopping trips)	
Number of pages of fieldnotes	Total Number of Pages
▪ 1 hour ~20 pages	7 x 20 = 140 pages 8 x 20 = 160 pages (2 events are the same where both participants were present) total = 300 pages
Number of Object Elicited conversation conducted	
2 total, 1 for Yamini and one for Neerada (time spend was 30 minutes for Yamini and 60 minutes for Neerada)	total pages = 15 pages
Total pages of data 125 + 32 + 130 + 15 = 477 pages	

Appendix D: Neerada's Negotiations

1. What are the material and discursive conditions of transnationalism that produce the experiences of two newly arrived female Indian graduate students in the context of higher education in the US?

Formal academia

Material and discursive conditions of transnationalism

- international student
- Other
- power relations
- alliance with teacher/professor centered academic environment as she experienced in India
- homogenization of culture
- differences in education standards
- patriarchal/authoritative relationship with male professors (expectations)

Informal academia

- homogenization of culture (cultural specimen, ambassador, myth breaker)
- experiences of Othering
- Racial divide in the community
- invisible privileges (McIntosh) of Whites
- Non-Indians' *understanding* of Indian-ness (inscription to traditionalism)
- erasure of own privileges that were present in India

Baldwin Towers

- proper Indian girl
- hybridity different from college culture hybridity in India
- erasure of privileges (class, caste, social status, visibility)
- power relations worked in terms of resources and access
- disciplinary gaze (straddling between modernity and tradition)
- Expectations of participation

Graduate Student Housing Indian Community

- No overt expectations of participation
- dismissal of Baldwin Towers discourses
- Improved material conditions of existence from Baldwin Towers
- Varied understanding and acceptance of transnationalism
- Support system for dealing with Baldwin Towers, formal and informal academia, and general US and non-resident Indian (NRI) culture

General US culture

- Communication protocols
- Ethnocentric news/entertainment media
- Helpfulness of people (compared to employed University staff in India)

Non-Resident Indian Culture

- distorted cultural practices
- distorted religious practices
- one-stop shop for all things Indian during religious festivals
- Loss of pride in language
- gendered gazing and comparing
- westernized and delayed celebrations

2. What relations and practices are enabled by the material and discursive conditions of transnationalism and how in turn do the two female Indian graduate students construct/maintain/dismiss subject positions from those relations and practices?

Material and Discursive Conditions of Transnationalism	Relations and practices	Subject positions	Maintain/construct/rework/dismiss
Academia (formal and informal) homogenization of culture Racial divisions relations of power (patriarchal, authoritative) Understanding Indian-ness	Docile student presence in classes combination/exploitation of roles – researcher and assistantship Dialogues about India and being Indian/Asian? Silences in dialogues about communication protocol Erasure about specific ways of being Indian (Marathi, Brahmin, upper caste, class, etc.)	international student Other non-resident alien female Indian student obedient student Indian (backwards/traditional?)	Maintain obedient student position Rework obedient student position rework understanding of Indian ness rework understanding of Otherness rework cultural and racial divide in department rework relations of power construct new subject position as a colleague
Baldwin Towers • proper Indian girl • hybridity different from college culture hybridity in India • erasure of privileges (class,	initial participation in community later do not need community support	Indian female proper Indian girl non-resident Indian modern/progressive Indian girl new student	rework proper Indian girl, non-resident Indian, and the straddling between modern and traditional expectations dismiss new student position when it means lack of

caste, social status, visibility) • power relations worked in terms of resources and access • disciplinary gaze (straddling between modernity and tradition) • Expectations of participation	align with expectations initially to gain access to resources, privileges (cooking, cleaning, spending time) deconstructing Otherness cultural festivals religious festivals conducting daily puja = proper Indian girl being secretive about certain modern practices (drinking, interested in new men) – maintaining agency and proper girl expectations		privileges and access to resources by about 3-4 months of being in the US maintain strong alliance with certain caste and religion based gendered subject positions carried over from India an overall process of belonging and becoming.... dismissing some belonging thereby becoming ... transnational with varied subject positions contesting expectations of Baldwin Towers community