

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT EXPERIENCES OF SECOND-
GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT EXPERIENCES OF
SECOND-GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

By

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Asian Pacific Islander college students are a growing and emerging population on college campuses in the United States (Accapadi, 2012). South Asian college students have often been categorized as part of the Asian Pacific Islander community and due to their model minority status have often been overlooked in research. Involvement is an important part of the college experience and has shown to increase retention and engagement on campus (Astin, 1984; Lundberg, et al., 2007). The purpose of this research study was to examine whether the ethnic identity of South Asian college students affects their choice of engagement and involvement in campus activities. This qualitative study examined the experiences of South Asian college students and their involvement at a large public research university in the Northeast. The implications of the study focused on the themes of family influence, ethnic identity, childhood involvement and career choice. In discussing the theme of family influence, there are three areas discussed: collective interdependence, fear of disappointment and respect for family, and involvement choices. The theme of ethnic identity there are discussions related to terminology, culturally based organizations and the idea of tokenism and model minority. The purpose of this study was to study the involvement practices of South Asian students and develop knowledge

INVOLVEMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

and themes to inform the practices of student affairs professions to more fully involve this emerging population of students.

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INVOLVEMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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INVOLVEMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Description of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Research Questions.....	3
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Definition of Terms and History of South Asian Immigration	4
Ethnic Identity and Acculturation.....	5
Acculturation.....	6
Ethnic identity.....	7
Student Involvement.....	11
Summary	13
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	15
Sample Selection	15
Data Collection.....	19
Data Analysis	20
Researcher's Role.....	22
Validity	24
Methods of Analysis	24
Significance	27
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	29
In What Campus Activities Are South Asian Students Involved?.....	30
Family Influence and Impact.....	32
Collective interdependence	33
Fear of disappointment and respect for family.....	37
Involvement choices.....	42
Ethnic Identity	46
Terminology.....	47
Culturally-based organizations versus non-culturally-based organizations.....	54
Tokenism and model minority.....	59
Childhood Involvement.....	61

INVOLVEMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Focus on Academic and Career Choice	66
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS	74
The Research Story	74
Discussion	76
In What Campus Activities Are South Asian Students Involved?	76
What Factors Play a Role in South Asian Student's Involvement Choice?	79
In What Ways Does Ethnic Identity Influence Involvement?	81
Implications	84
How can student affairs professionals and higher education leaders change practices to encourage more involvement and engagement of South Asian students?	84
Academic Focus	85
Navigating Family	86
Cultural Competency Training	88
Limitations and Opportunities for Further Study	89
Conclusion	93
REFERENCES.....	95
Appendix A: Student Bios.....	101
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	108
Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer and Email.....	110
Appendix D: Consent form.....	112
Appendix E: Coding Tree	115
Appendix F: Intake Survey.....	117
Appendix G: Accapadi Asian American Identity Consciousness Model	125

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Problem

This study explored the ethnic identity of South Asian college students and the impact ethnic identity has on decision-making about engagement and involvement on campus. The research grew out of the researcher's work as a student affairs administrator at a large state university in the Northeast with a significant South Asian student population. The goal was to investigate how these new, emerging populations of students are involved on campus. Research has shown that involvement of students has a strong correlation with retention, engagement, and GPA on campus (Astin, 1984; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, & Miller, 2007). By increasing involvement on campus, students are less likely to transfer and more likely to learn about resources on campus that can assist them.

South Asian students are often placed in the ethnic category of Asian Pacific Islander (API). Asian Pacific Islanders are individuals from the countries from the continent of Asia, and include the countries in the Pacific Islands. API students are increasing on college campuses, and the South Asian population is growing steadily along with them (Accapadi, 2012). API students are considered a "model minority" (Accapadi, 2012). Thus, even though the API population is increasing on college campuses, their status as a model minority has meant that they are often overlooked or marginally considered (Accapadi, 2012). South Asian is defined as people who claim heritage from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, and Bangladesh (Accapadi, 2012). In contrast to the larger and more encompassing category of API students, there is very little research literature on South Asian college students and campus involvement

and engagement. Thus, South Asian students have not been a focus of recruitment for student affairs professionals in campus involvement and engagement initiatives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to study whether the ethnic identity of South Asian students affects their choice of engagement and involvement in campus activities. By studying the involvement practices of South Asian students and using this knowledge to develop new practices and programs that more fully involve a growing population of students, this research aims to improve the practice of higher education leaders and student affairs professionals. This study will produce more information that will provide valuable insights into this emerging population of students for which there is very little research presently.

Specifically, this study investigated the types and kinds of campus involvement that South Asian students are affiliated with, how they choose their types and kinds of involvement, and whether there are relationships between their involvement, choices for involvement, and their ethnic identities. These findings will be used to provide recommendations about higher education policies and practices for increasing the involvement of this population since research that shows that students who are more involved perform better in college. Though there is some research literature on what students are involved with and the impact of their involvement, there is little literature regarding how students decide what organizations and activities to engage with and why they choose to participate in certain activities (Astin, 2006; Inkelas, 2004; Kwon, 2008). The research regarding South Asian students specifically is even more limited.

The South Asian immigration occurred largely post-1970's and at different stages and ages. South Asian students identify in different ways with their culture and ethnicity because of

the range of immigration patterns. This study is designed to address a gap in the literature on student involvement by focusing on types, levels, and choices for involvement, as well as a gap in the literature on South Asian students. This research aimed to provide a research base for higher education leaders and student affairs professionals to design more effective policies and practices for South Asian students in colleges and universities.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

- 1.) In what campus activities are South Asian students involved?
- 2.) What factors play a role in South Asian students' involvement choices?
- 3.) In what ways does ethnic identity influence their involvement?
- 4.) How can student affairs professionals and higher education leaders change practices to encourage more involvement and engagement of South Asian students?

The findings of the study are categorized into four main themes. The four main themes are family influence, ethnic identity, childhood involvement and focus on academic and career choice. The themes of family influence and ethnic identity have sub themes which are described in Chapter 4 in the findings section. These four main themes address questions revolving questions one, two and three. Chapter 5 in the implications sections will address the final research questions with implications and suggestions for student affairs professionals focused on cultural competency training, suggestions on how to work with families, and suggestions on how to work with and advise South Asian students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will examine the three main areas of this research. In the first section, the term South Asian will be defined and the history of South Asian immigration into the United States will be explored. The second section will explore ethnic identity development and acculturation. The final section will define involvement and why it is important for college students.

Definition of Terms and History of South Asian Immigration

According to the 2000 US census, South Asian peoples are the third largest Asian group in the United States behind Chinese and Filipino (Patel, 2010). South Asian is defined as people who claim heritage from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, and Bangladesh. This conflation of South Asians within the gross category of “Asian” is problematic. “The use of Asian American as an umbrella category... can obscure demographic differences that need to be addressed” (McEwen, Kodoma, Alvarez, Lee, & Liang, 2002, p. 18). Although similar in many respects, South Asian communities have important differences in their histories and cultures. Historically, the South Asian community predominately immigrated after the Immigration Act of 1965, which opened the door for highly educated Asians and their families (Patel, 2010). There are traces of South Asians dating back in the United States earlier than that, but the larger population of South Asian immigrants arrived post-1965 (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Pillari, 2005). An important distinction to make about the South Asian population, in comparison with other immigrants, is that many did not immigrate to the United States due to fear of war or persecution in their home country; instead they did so for opportunities for further education and

jobs (Pillari, 2005). Also, due to the British colonial rule of South Asian countries, most South Asians were exposed to the English language, which allowed for an easier language transition (Almeidia, 2005; Farver, et al., 2002).

Although there has been little research about South Asian student populations, South Asian students have been placed into the category of Asian Pacific Islanders (API). Therefore, the current research on the API population is very relevant to the study of South Asian college students. The API population in the United States and on college campuses is growing at a rapid rate. For example, on some west coast campuses, API students now comprise nearly one-fifth to half of the overall undergraduate enrollment (Inkelas, 2004). As the API population continues to grow, so does the South Asian population. Little student affairs research has been conducted on the growing subgroup of South Asians within the API population of students. The South Asian students are unique and have distinct needs that vary along with their ethnic identity.

Ethnic Identity and Acculturation

Ethnicity and acculturation are important to the identities of South Asian college students. Ethnic identity is defined as an individual's sense of identification and belonging to an ethnic group (Phinney, 1990). Acculturation is how the individual adapts to the dominant culture through changes in behavior, values and beliefs (Phinney, 1990). To clarify, ethnic identity is focused on *how* an individual identifies while acculturation is to the *degree to which* an individual identifies (Phinney, 1990). For example, individuals who are highly acculturated in the United States, may use English as their primary language and adopt Western values, but they also may identify themselves as Indian, which is their ethnic identity. Acculturation is based

more on how well the person is assimilated to the host country, while ethnic identity is a sense of cultural attachment and belonging.

Acculturation.

There are different scales of acculturation, but two main studies that have dealt with acculturation of Asian Pacific Islanders. Sue and Sue (1971) describe a model in which Asian Americans could fall into three categories: (1) traditionalist, those who keep very close ethnic values and practices; (2) marginal, individuals who embrace more White or western culture and reject Asian cultural norms; (3) Asian American, those who balance both Asian and Western cultural norms. Though this model focuses on three main categories, it does not examine the idea that an individual may not identify with the host country's culture or their Asian culture. The model does not address the aspect of acculturation that deals with the individuals who may be confused or not sure about what their ethnic identity may be. For this study, students experiencing this are important, as they may not seek out resources or organizations that address ethnicity, or they may feel alienated from both cultures.

Berry and Kim (1988) proposed another acculturation model, in which there are four different ways that individuals can interact with their host culture: (1) assimilate - identify mainly with the dominant culture; (2) marginalize - reject their own and their host culture; (3) separate - identify mainly with their own culture and reject host culture; (4) integrate - identify with characteristics of both cultures. Though the two models use similar verbiage in marginal and marginalize, the terms are used very differently. In the Berry and Kim model marginalize denotes category not include in the Sue and Sue model, marginalized, in which an individual who may not identify with either their host or their Asian culture. Krishnan and Berry (1992)

also conducted a study using the Berry and Kim (1988) model in researching acculturation stress as it relates to Indian immigrants to the United States. This model was tested with immigrants who are older, but can be applied to college students.

In this study of South Asian college students, the category of marginalization is relevant. As students are exposed to more interests and ideas that may broaden their horizons it may impact their exploration of their ethnic identities. Including marginalized students in this research is important since those students may be disproportionately less involved or less engaged on campus. By engaging students on campus through involvement opportunities, students will develop skills and ideas that can help them stay connected to campus and provide access to resources that can be helpful (Hernandez, Hogan, & Hathaway, 1999). Students categorized as marginalized may or may not seek out ethnically oriented groups, and may find it difficult to find a student organization to which they can relate. They may choose organizations based on personal interests rather than those based on ethnicity. Marginalized students may feel that resources are not readily available to them because they do not identify with support systems based on ethnic identity, and the confusion of not belonging can alienate them. These students may feel as if they do not belong anywhere within the structure or that no one can relate to what their feeling.

Ethnic identity.

Phinney (1990) found considerable confusion in her literature review of definitions of ethnic identity. For example, in much of the literature she found that ethnic identity was defined as the ethnic component of social identity, which Tajfel (1981, p. 255, as cited in Phinney, 1990) describes as “that part of an individual’s self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of

membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to its membership” (p. 500). Researchers of ethnic identity find that aspects of social identity such as group membership and shared values are key components of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990). In other literature, ethnic identity is defined as an amalgam of different factors, including, but not limited to, self-identification, social networks, religious affiliation, language and cultural traditions and practices (Phinney, 1992). Phinney (1990) attempts to integrate these different views by identifying four major components of ethnic identity: self-identification, ethnic behaviors and practice, affirmation and sense of belonging, and ethnic identity achievement. Phinney tries to sort out the confusion by offering an integrated view.

Self-identification is the label used for personal reference (Phinney, 1990). This is where ethnic identity and ethnicity might be differentiated. One might be ethnically Indian or South Asian due to their birth or their ethnicity of their parents, but that person may not embrace an Indian or South Asian ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is a term of social self-identification based on factors other than place of birth or parental background. It is a “self-label” and it allows for individuals who may consider themselves of mixed backgrounds or when there is a difference from the way others may identify them based on their appearance.

Ethnic behaviors and practice include two aspects; involvement in social activities with members of one’s group and participation in cultural traditions (Phinney, 1992). Students on college campuses may exhibit ethnic behavior through attending cultural events on campus or through participation in ethnically oriented student organizations. They may also exhibit ethnic behaviors outside of campus through involvement in their local communities and religious organizations.

Affirmation and belonging are other key component of ethnic identity. Individuals may feel a sense of “pride” or positive feelings toward the group (Phinney, 1992). This positivity measures the level of connection or affirmation with a group. If the sense of belonging is low, individuals may choose to hide or change their ethnic identity. They may choose to not affiliate with ethnically based groups or not identify with their ethnic identity. If they are affirmed or feel a sense of pride, they may choose to participate in events related to their ethnicity or to affiliate with student organizations related to their cultural group.

Ethnic identity achievement is a developmental process (Phinney, 1992). “The process of ethnic identity formation appears to involve an exploration of the meaning of one’s ethnicity (e.g. its history and traditions) that leads to a secure sense of one’s self as a member of a minority group” (Phinney, 1992, p. 161). Ethnic identity achievement is an ongoing process that can be assessed through interview questions. The interview questions in this study allow for variations due to changes in society. This allows the interviewer to assess ethnic identity achievement though the lens of contexts such as history and traditions.

Phinney (1992) states that the process is of ethnic identity achievement can vary from the lack of exploration, which means individuals have low interest in their ethnicity and have not explored it or are committed to a high interest in exploration of their identity and commitment. This exploration and commitment must also be assessed through learning about one’s background, which would build context to their identity. A high score or high interest can be defined as ethnic identity achievement or a low score can be defined as ethnic identity diffusion (Phinney, 1992).

The process of ethnic identity development involves a movement through four phases: diffuse, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement (Phinney, 1990). The diffuse stage occurs when individuals have not explored their ethnic identity and have little interest in their ethnicity. The foreclosure stage occurs when individuals define their commitment to their identity based on their parents and not independently (Yeh & Huang, 1996). In foreclosure, their identity is based on the opinions of others rather than their own (Phinney, 1990). The moratorium stage occurs when individuals explore their identity but have not yet made a decision on the one with which they identify. These individuals are exploring their ethnicity in this stage and are trying to find a meaning for themselves rather than the way it is defined by others (Phinney, 1990). In the last stage, identity achievement individuals have clear ideas of their ethnicity and they are committed to those ideas (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Identity formation is an important part of the college student experience. Students are exposed to a variety of different ideas, socially, spiritually, and culturally, and to new organizations that may differ from the environment in which they were raised (Pillari, 2005). This is also a time when they may be separating from their family, due to moving on campus and are exploring their personal identities. In Garrod and Kilkenny's (2007) book *Balancing Two Worlds*, the authors explore the stories of Asian American college students and include a number of South Asian student stories. In the foreword, they describe the multiple identities that students must balance: "For Asian Americans, then, how to reconfigure personal, sexual, and racial identities takes both individual and collective forms" (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007, p. 11). South Asian students struggle with their ethnic identity as they enter college, and this is further complicated by struggles on the acculturation spectrum. Pillari (2005) writes specifically about

Asian Indian families in the United States and describes how acculturation can vary depending on a number of factors including, education, class caste, religion, economic support, family size, and immigration history. These factors can make acculturation stressful for families (Almeida, 2005).

This is further complicated by the idea of being part of a collective society. The Asian and South Asian communities are collectivist societies in that individuals are part of a larger family and community (Huong, 2012). For example, Hinduism, which is the one of the main religions in the South Asian community, is focused on divinity, community and interdependence (Pillari, 2005). This is in stark contrast to the Western ideas of individualism. Identity development for South Asian college students explores personal, sexual and racial identities within the context of a collectivist tradition and culture.

Student Involvement

There is a significant body of research evidence that college students who are involved on campus grow more academically and socially because of the learning and personal development they experience in their activities. (Astin, 1984) Student involvement can be defined in many ways. One model defines involvement to include studying, spending time on campus, participating in student organizations, peer interactions, extracurricular activities, and intercollegiate athletics (Astin, 1984).

Student involvement is also defined as an “out of class experience” that impacts student learning and development by providing additional support for what is being taught in the classroom (Kwon, 2008). This type of involvement has also been shown to foster individual growth and increased satisfaction with their educational experiences (Kwon, 2008). Students

who are involved on campus in some way feel more closely connected to the university, which allows for further engagement with other individuals (Astin, 1991). This study is particularly interested in the intersection of ethnic identity and student involvement. Thus, for the purpose of this study, student involvement will be examined through the categories of ethnically based or cultural student organizations, community service, fraternities and sororities, academic organizations, performance and arts or sports.

Student involvement can have different impacts on those who identify as students of color. Kwon (2008) notes that in other studies “research on African American, Latino, and Native American college students found that participation in smaller ethnic oriented organizations is critical for providing a comfortable academic and social environment for ethnic minority students” (p. 2). Ethnically based organizations provide a support system for students of color, which can assist them during their time at college. Research also finds that students who participate in ethnically based student organization have an increase in knowledge about ethnicity and a greater sense of belonging (Inkelas, 2004).

This study further expands upon Inkelas’s (2004) study and also explores why students may or may not become involved with ethnic co-curricular activities. Past studies so far have focused on how ethnic co-curricular activities have assisted in the development of student ethnic identity, but there have been no studies on what impact ethnic identity has on students’ choice to be involved on campus or if it is even a factor in their involvement.

Previous studies of involvement have not focused on how involvement in general has an impact on minority students, if they are not ethnically based. Student involvement of minority students, that is, not ethnically based, could have an impact on students, but there is very little

research on this and how it could be related to ethnic identity. One of the fundamental critiques of Astin's theory is that it does not address the assimilation and acculturation frameworks and "underestimates the cost of involvement for minority students" (Lundberg, et al., 2007). Astin's theory (1984) focused on involvement of individual student but does not focus on the institution's responsibility to provide diverse multicultural programs. It does not allow for the exploration of how acculturation or ethnic identity may have an impact on student's decision-making and involvement.

Summary

Given the literature, the study will be guided by the following definitions of key terms. Ethnic identity will be defined as the term the students use to self-identify based on factors of their own, beyond their parent's place of birth or their own location of birth. The self-label helps students to define their identities in their own terms and goes beyond physical appearance. Acculturation is defined by the way one adapts to the host culture. Although acculturation is not used as the main theoretical framework for this study, it is important to understand that the South Asian students that are involved in this study may have different levels of acculturation. They may adapt differently to their host cultures and the navigation of their identities. This is especially true of those students who may fit into the category of marginalized. Lastly, student involvement is a broad term that will be used to describe different aspects of the students' experiences outside of the classroom. These can include student organizations that are culturally based involvement, academically based, research or academic involvement, sports, arts, fraternity and sorority life, community service, and religious based groups.

This study examines the connections and themes that emerge when you look at the ethnic identity and student of South Asian students.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This phenomenological study examines data from individual, in-person interviews. Creswell (2013) defines phenomenological inquiry as the study of “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 76). In this study, the participants shared the experience of being involved at the same university and share the identity of second-generation South Asian college student.

Interviews with individuals who have common experiences are a standard form of data collection for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013). The interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured and allowed for the students to share their experiences about involvement on campus. “We interview people to find out from those things we cannot directly observe...Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit.” (Patton, 1990, p. 278) Specifically, the interview protocols mirrored the research questions and focused on what organizations/activities students were involved with, how they made choices about their involvement, and the role that ethnic identity and other factors had in these choices and involvements. The interview questions also solicited information about the student’s ethnic identity and their level of acculturation. The next sections describe sample selection, data collection, and methods of analysis.

Sample Selection

Rutgers University is a large state institution with over 30,000 undergraduate students, of which over 25% identify as Asian (Rutgers diversity). Of the 20% of Asian students, the exact percentage of South Asian students is unknown due to the fact that Asian students are

categorized together. According to the Rutgers University Student involvement homepage, there are many ethnically-based South Asian student organizations on campus, such as the Association of Indians at Rutgers, the Bangladeshi student organization, and several religious-based student organizations that are Hindu, Christian, and Islamic. South Asian students are also involved with student organizations that are not ethnically based (Rutgers New Brunswick - Organizations) his allowed for a variety of students, organizations, and involvements from which to recruit.

In order to have a more consistent population of students specifically related to acculturation, the sample was limited to second-generation South Asian students, defined as students born in the United States with one or more parents born in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal or Bhutan. These countries of origin are traditionally considered under the umbrella of South Asian and are part of the Indian Asian sub-continent (Accapadi, 2012). The participant population was restricted to the ages of 18-24 to increase consistency in the sample.

Purposeful sampling is an important part of qualitative studies and for phenomenological studies criterion sampling is an important element (Creswell, 2013). The sample in this study was homogeneous in that all participants were traditionally-aged, second generation, South Asian college students, involved on campus and attending the same institution. With this type of qualitative research, purposeful sampling must be conducted with individuals who understand the problem and have knowledge of the questions at hand (Creswell, 2009). The students who participated in the study were initially given a questionnaire that explained the study and the research questions.

Students were recruited through email listservs, flyers and snowball sampling. Please see Appendix B for the flyers and emails that were sent to the students. Snowball sampling, or chain

sampling, is a method used to assemble a sample of individuals who fit the criteria (Creswell, 2013). There are numerous student organizations that meet on campus, and listservs and flyers are easy ways to recruit students to participate. With the use of multiple recruitment tools, about forty traditionally-aged, second-generation South Asian college students from a variety of types of organizations identified interest in participating. Equal gender representation and diverse involvements of the student in the sample were also sought. The diversity of majors was also considered, but it was difficult to find students who had majors that were not in business, science or in a field that had a direct showcase of success. Traxler (2009) introduces a new model of “Assessing Fit in Major Choice” that showcases the different factors that impact South Asian women’s major choice. These key factors are respectability, suitability, social context and access (Traxler, 2009). A major in the arts does not necessarily meet the needs of respectability because there is no direct path to success and thus students may not choose it as readily as some of the other majors. Table 1 presents the participant profiles of the sample of students who participated in the study.

Table 1
Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Religion	Major	Class Year	Involvement	Ethnicity	Gender	Ethnically Oriented
Amy	21	Hindu	Supply chain management	senior	Academic Student Org, Performing Arts, Student government, Cultural group	Indian	Female	Both
Becky	20	Christian	Cell Biology and Neuroscience	sophomore	Community Service, Ethnically oriented Performing Arts	Indian	Female	Both
Brian	21	Unsure	Math	senior	Social Fraternity, Programming Board	Indian	Male	No
Delilah	20	Muslim	Nutritional Science	junior	Academic Student Group, Community Service	Bangladesh	Female	No
Emelia	19	Hindu	Psychology	sophomore	Community Service & Leadership	Indian	Female	No
Ket	21	Unsure	Political Science	senior	Academic organizations, Honor Society	South Asian	Male	No
Kim	19	Hindu	Finance	sophomore	Community Service, Club Sport, Social	Indian	Female	No

Table 1, cont.*Participant Profiles*

Natalie	21	Hindu	Public Health	senior	Academic and Community Service, Honor Society, Intramurals	South Asian	Female	No
Prashankumar	21	Christian	Political Science	senior	Academic Student Group, Religious	Indian	Male	No
Raj	19	Hindu	Supply chain management	sophomore	Ethnically Oriented Social Fraternity, Cultural Group, Academic group	Indian	Male	Both
Reena	21	Unsure	Economics	senior	Academic Student Group, Community Service	Indian	Female	Yes
Sahil	18	Unsure	Cell Biology and Neuroscience	first year	Academic student organization	Indian	Male	No
Sameeha	21	Muslim	Criminal Justice	senior	Community service, Honor Society	South Asian	Female	No
Shanti	21	Unsure	Supply chain management	senior	Academic and Business Fraternity	Bi-Racial	Female	No
Selina	19	Hindu	Exercise Science	sophomore	Cultural Performing Arts, Community Service	South Asian	Female	Both
Sonya	21	Hindu	Accounting	senior	Business Fraternity	Indian	Female	No

Data Collection

The data for this study came from semi-structured, individual, in-person interviews. The interviews took place at a public location on campus that was convenient to the participants and quiet and conducive to interviewing. The students completed an initial interview intake form and were selected to setup an interview based on the diversity of their organizations, their majors and their countries of origin. Eighteen students were initially interviewed, but two interviews were removed due to lack of content and information.

The semi-structured interview questions focused on the research questions while allowing latitude for students to address these focused questions in their own voice. Appendix B includes the initial interview protocol. The questions focused on a) students' involvements; b) students' ethnic identity and acculturation; and c) students' decision-making on their involvements. Participants were asked to describe, explain and elaborate on their answers. "The purpose of interviewing... is to allow us to enter into the other's perspective" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Additionally, field notes were assembled to record preliminary thoughts about coding. Field notes are used to note the behavior and activity of individuals during the interview and these can be taken in a structures or unstructured way (Creswell, 2009). The notes were another data source and allowed me to triangulate the data to ensure validity.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis of themes and codes. Coding "involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information." (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). The transcribed interviews were reviewed for accuracy and placed in the

qualitative analysis software system Dedoose for coding. Creswell (2013) writes that the traditional approach to creating codes is to allow the codes to emerge through the data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe how one method of creating codes is to generate a “start list” that is produced from the research questions, hypotheses, and problem areas. This method allows the researcher to have some codes ahead of time and provide a starting point. Another approach is to use inductive coding, where the researcher reviews the data and creates codes based on the patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

For this study, I used both inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis allows patterns, themes and categories to emerge from the data, while deductive analysis uses an existing framework for data analysis (Patton, 2002). The analysis of the data focused on the participants’ ethnic identity, their involvement, and their decision-making in choosing the organizations with which they are involved. “Qualitative researchers do have a set of assumptions, criteria, decision rules, and operations for working with data to decide when a given finding is established and meaningful” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 22). Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest that data analysis should be conducted concurrently with three different flows of activity – data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is the way in which one selects, simplifies and takes raw data to create edited field notes. This is also done through the entire process of data analysis, that is, before, during, and after data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Data reduction would be conducted throughout the process of data analysis. Data display is “defined as an organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 24). For this study, a coding tree was created and common themes were utilized to develop the data display and context charts mapped

relationships among the emerging themes. The coding tree is listed in the Appendix as Appendix E. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the information in the data reduction was compared to the data display. The validity of the data was tested and compared with field notes.

Additionally, validity checks with members were conducted and compared with the research questions and the conceptual frameworks of ethnic identity and involvement. Memoing, which is described as an insight, a grouping, and a noticeable event (Miles & Huberman, 1984), was also used to document different emerging themes through the coding and data analysis process.

Researcher's Role

The researcher served as Director of Leadership at a public, four-year college. In this role she worked with students engaged in student organizations on campus training student leaders and advising student organizations.

The researcher's positionality is a South Asian student affairs professional with strong personal and professional interests in programming for and advising of South Asian students. The researcher's position could be a source of bias but also an advantage in the data collection phase. While conducting interviews, students assumed the researcher understood terms or ideas based on her position. To compensate and ensure that the students and the researcher were interpreting things the same way, the researcher asked students to clarify when assumptions were voiced. The researcher's role as a South Asian student affairs professional allowed the students to feel more comfortable in sharing their stories with someone whom they felt understood or related to them. During the interview, the consent form (see Appendix D) and the fact that their involvement was strictly voluntary were explained to the students. They were also reassured that their stories and information would be kept confidential, and that they could edit their responses

freely. The researcher encountered a few students around campus or at events and maintained a friendly atmosphere. The researcher served as an advisor to one of the students at one time and maintained contact with her via social media. The researcher is also a Facebook friend with a few of the participants and follows their progress throughout their college and post college experience.

During the interviews, the researcher took copious notes and recorded her observations in a journal. She wrote notes about possible codes and reflected on her experiences and motivations. This allowed the researcher to reflect and be cognizant of my own assumptions and biases.

In order to ensure validity and identify bias in the researcher's analysis, peer reviewers reread her codes and themes. "A peer reviewer provides support, plays devil's advocate, challenges the researcher's assumptions, pushes the researcher to the next step methodologically, and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129).

The first peer reviewer was a first generation Portuguese woman who worked as an academic adviser in academic affairs on a different campus of the university in which the study took place. The individual worked closely with South Asian college students in this role. The reviewer and researcher met on multiple occasions to discuss the implications of the study. The reviewer identified common experiences with the students with which she worked. Her perspective was helpful and enhanced the areas of the academic findings.

The second peer reviewer was a white woman who worked in academic affairs at the university in which the study was set. In addition to the knowledge she has gained about these students through her work in student affairs, she conducted dissertation research on South Asian

women and their major choice and has a doctorate in Education. She asked questions that were relevant to the topic and enabled the researcher to examine similarities in our research themes.

Validity

Methods triangulation, using quantitative data to reconcile the information received through qualitative methods, is a way to further ensure validity of the data (Patton, 1990).

Triangulation is a procedure in which the researcher looks for similarities amongst the different data sources (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For this study, the information received from the interview was triangulated and reviewed with the field notes taken during the interview. Journal notes were used to analyze the information as well as inform and analyze the code.

Methods of Analysis

This was a phenomenological study that analyzed data through reading transcripts, reviewing notes and analysis of the interviews to create meaning and common themes. (Creswell, 2013) This study started with a review of interview notes and in comparison with the research question. Recordings were then reviewed to determine if any of the initial themes that were discussed in the process were missed. Also, the transcript of the student recordings was compared with the recordings to ensure accuracy. Slang or terms culturally relevant to South Asian students, which the transcriber may not have known, were clarified, examined and highlighted. The data was then reviewed for “significant statements” and data that decipher the “essence of the experience” central to a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013).

Inductive and deductive coding were performed. The deductive codes were based on the notes and the themes from my initial review and the pilot study. The pilot study tested the

questions in the interview protocol and examined the initial themes and codes that were common. One such example of a theme derived through deduction was the code of family.

The inductive codes were based on themes generated through line by line review of the transcriptions, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), who stated that with this method a common theme might be found at the end of the paragraph that creates a category that may encompass that theme. Themes were examined, memos or notes about the themes created, and commonalities identified. Based on the commonalities, themes were identified and codes created. Field notes were reviewed for common phrases, another phenomenon that Miles and Huberman (1994) used to assist with the creation of a theme. Patton (2002) states “Recording and tracking analytical insights that occur during data collection are part of fieldwork and the beginning of qualitative analysis” (p. 436). He continues to state that you must not “repress all analytical thoughts” while collecting data, but instead be open to ideas, not overdo it and not rush to conclusions early on (Patton, 2002, p. 436). Inductive codes were allowed to emerge from the data. The process coalesced as the inductive codes reiterated some of the deductive codes that were identified in the initial analysis.

After the initial review of the transcripts and codes, themes and codes were referred back to the research questions to make sure that the codes were consistent with the initial research questions. Patton (2002) states that it is important to refer back to the original evaluation research to assist with the discussion, allow the analysis to stay focused, and perhaps force a reexamination of the focus of the original research question. In the case of this study, the researcher reexamined the third research question to better fit the data and analysis for this study. The original research question was 3) How does ethnic identity effect their involvement? It was

then changed to 3) In what ways does ethnic identity influence their involvement? In evaluating the data, this new question allowed the results to be better showcased and was more consistent with the themes that were generated. Although ethnic identity influenced students' experience, it did not have an impact and there was no cause and effect significance. Thus, the research question was modified to focus on the themes that were relevant and appropriate to the data.

After codes were generated, the codes, memos and field notes were further analyzed for relevant information. Interview recordings were again reviewed for a sense of the "voices" of the students. Relevant quotes were identified and edited to protect the confidentiality of interviewees. Dedoose, the qualitative software system, allowed for the codes and themes to be showcased and for data management, enabling a reexamination of the codes to further develop the themes and categories that emerged through the process. Patton (2002) states "the final confirmatory state of qualitative analysis may be deductive in testing and affirming the authenticity and appropriateness of the inductive content analysis, including carefully examining deviate cases or data that don't fit the categories developed" (p. 454). In examining the data, a few items, such as non-traditional major choice, did not fit the themes exactly but were still relevant to the context of the study. Those items were noted and kept for possible future studies. A literature study identified prior research studies completed, specifically Accapadi's (2012) APIDA identity development model and Sue and Sue's acculturation model (Sue & Sue, 1971). These were used to examine the themes that may have impacted or seemed similar or relevant to the ideas.

A grouping and regrouping process was used on the coding of terms and identified a large code focused on family influence. The code was then changed to positive and negative

family influence and analyzed for cross coding with impact on career choice or involvement. This enabled the extrapolation of different sub themes within the larger themes.

Another helpful tool in organizing the data was the descriptors function in Dedoose, which allowed the descriptive information about each participant (age, major, type of involvement, etc.) to be correlated with the emerging themes. This process assisted in examining how students involved with academic organizations mentioned career choice and growth, as well as the unexpected finding that family also impacted career choice and growth. Due to the correlation of academic organizations, family impact and career choice, the researcher was able to extrapolate the idea of credentialing and redefining success as a future implication and suggestion which will be showcased in Chapters 4 and 5.

The data analysis was done with inductive and deductive analysis and was triangulated for validity. With 18 interviews, there was a large amount of data to review and examine, that allowed for a rich pool of information and themes. With the use of tools such as Dedoose, the data analysis was organized and allowed for effective processing and analysis of data.

Significance

South Asian college students are an emerging and growing population on campuses across the country (Accapadi, 2012). As this emerging population develops, there is a need for more research on how to engage this growing population and their unique backgrounds. South Asian college students have been categorized as API students but they have unique characteristics and there is very little research on them (Accapadi, 2012). Moreover, there is very little research on South Asian students and their involvement on campus. Involvement is an important part of the college experience and has been shown to increase retention and provide

valuable skills to college students (Lundberg, et al., 2007; Astin, 1984). This research hopes to assist student affairs professionals with information about how to engage this growing population and their involvement on campus.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 presents findings from the research on how South Asian student involvement was influenced by a number of different factors and the context of those influences. Four main themes emerged in data analysis: family influence, ethnic identity, childhood involvement, and focus on academics and career. The presentation of findings will be organized in these categories and subcategories:

Family Influence

Collective interdependence

Fear of disappointment/Respect for family

Involvement Choice

Ethnic Identity

Terms

Cultural vs. Non-Cultural Involvement

Token/Model minority

Childhood Involvement

Focus on Academic and Career Choice.

This chapter will first discuss research question one and then discuss the themes that are reflective of the research questions two and three. The final research question will be discussed in Chapter 5 with the implications section. As a reminder, the research questions for this study are:

- 1.) In what campus activities are South Asian students involved?

- 2.) What factors play a role in South Asian students' involvement choices?
- 3.) In what ways does ethnic identity influence their involvement?
- 4.) How can student affairs professionals and higher education leaders change practices to encourage more involvement and engagement of South Asian students?

In What Campus Activities Are South Asian Students Involved?

Campus activities are influential in student retention and increase the sense of belonging students experience on college campuses (Astin, 1999). Previous studies show that involvement in student organizations, research activities and out of the classroom experiences increase retention rates and increase leadership skills (Astin, 1999). Additional studies have focused on the impact of cultural or ethnically oriented student organizations on student's sense of belonging. Kwon (2008) notes that student involvement in ethnically oriented organizations provided students from ethnic minority groups with academic and social systems on campus. While compelling in its overall focus on the impact of student involvement, however, this literature has not focused specifically on kinds of involvement or how students make decisions about involvement. This research gathered data on these issues to broaden the understanding of the role of student involvement in student success on campus. In this research, students chose to participate in groups based on their sense of belonging and feeling of connection to the group. In addition, the majority of students were involved in an academic based student group.

Students engaged with both culturally based groups and non-culturally based groups due to a variety of interests, including a desire to forward their academic success. They consistently selected organizations that were related to their academic major to assist with networking thus forming connections with their academic focus and career. This pattern is consistent with Hune

and Chan (1997) who found that Asian Americans choose to attend college with a specific professional goal, rather than explore fields or areas outside of their major because success is defined as completing their education and obtaining a job.

For some students, the sense of belonging and feeling of connection with a student group was culturally based. Four students were involved in student organizations that were related to culturally based groups and also expressed interest in non-culturally based groups. These four students notably had participated in activities that were culturally based when they were younger. Their families were involved with groups that were culturally based when the students were growing up and their participation in college mirrored those activities and may have originated in family experience or influence.

Students took part in a large variety of student organizations and campus involvements. For example, they took part in student government, community service activities, honor societies, club sports, religious organizations, musical groups, and social or academically based fraternities and sororities. They joined organizations for which they felt they had a “fit.” The students spoke about how they “fit” or had a sense of belonging to the group and felt comfortable with individuals who had similar ideas and expectations. Shanti, a senior supply chain management major, describes how she started to get involved with a business fraternity but eventually chose not to continue with the organization:

I went to rush a business fraternity my sophomore year. So I did think about it. I did think about getting involved. I actually didn't really connect with people that much, or talk to that many people. It was kind of overwhelming for me because it was a lot of people...I think that's the biggest factor. Who you are with and when you join, who you know. I know that's not a good thing, but that's the truth. That's just how it is... And then with the business fraternity I didn't really connect with people, so I didn't end up getting the bid.

Shanti describes how she did not feel as if this experience was the right fit for her, noting the large number of participants and her feelings of disconnection from the group. Due to lack of connection and fit, she decided to start a different business fraternity with a group of students who had similar ideas and were interested in a smaller organization. She was able to create an experience that was a good fit for her and shared the experience with other students with similar ideas.

In summary, South Asian students are involved with a variety of organizations and select them based on interests and fit. The theme of how these interests may have developed and how this may impact the “fit” or sense of belonging to the group will be explored more fully further in the study.

The first research question allowed the researcher to explore the types of involvement in which students were interested. The second and third research questions (2) What factors play a role in South Asian students’ involvement choices? and (3) In what ways does ethnic identity influence their involvement? are discussed in more depth through the following themes.

Family Influence and Impact

The first theme to emerge from the data analysis is the influence and impact of family. Research demonstrates that South Asian families strongly value collectivism versus individualization. A collectivist orientation holds that the primary importance lies in the family unit (Ibrahim, et al., 1997; Shariff, 2009), which consists not only of the parents and grandparents, but also the extended family of aunts, uncles and cousins (Ibrahim, et al., 1997). Family member interdependence lasts through the lifespan and family goals are considered paramount (Shariff, 2009). The theme of collectivism in the South Asian culture emerged clearly

and consistently in the interviews as a primary influence in students' involvement in college. For the participants in this research, it was clear that they regarded family as an integral part of the individual's identity and the primary source of values. For example, most of the students explained that individuals outside of their culture did not understand the role of family in their lives and the impact of this interdependence on their identity, college involvement and post-graduate plans.

Family is an influential element in a variety of different areas. In terms of students' choice of involvement on campus, three broad individual themes emerged based on how family had an influence or impact on the student: collective decision-making, fear of disappointment/respect and involvement choice.

Collective interdependence.

A primary example of family influence and impact is students' tendencies toward collective interdependence in decision-making. Participants spoke often about how they consulted and talked with their parents about making decisions related to a variety of areas of their lives, including choices about student involvement on campus.

For example, Selina is a sophomore exercise science student who recently transferred to the University and was looking for off-campus housing for the upcoming semester. She said, "I was doing housing stuff and I'm about to go meet up with these people to see if I wanted to room with them and I just called my parents. That's the first thing I did, I called my parents, hey I'm going to meet these girls, I'm planning to live here. Some people don't feel they should tell their parents, they need to or anything like that. I don't know, that was kind of the first thing that I did." Selina goes on to say that once she found that she liked the place, she contacted her parents

to confirm her decision. Similarly, she describes a parallel process in her decision to transfer schools:

I mean it's still totally [my decision] to pick a place I want to be at... it's funny because they say don't let us influence your decision. They will be; "oh we love Rutgers," because you know, not as much money as [previous school] awesome. A little bit more well known, awesome. But at the end of the day they just say if you want to stay at [previous school], stay at [previous school] we will still support you. So I think it's funny how we go to them. In that situation I went to them seeking some kind of go to Rutgers, stay at [previous school], but really they just trusted me enough to make that decision on my own.

It is important to note that this collectivist behavior included soliciting parents' opinion, but the participants were clear that they retained the final decision for themselves. Selina saw her parents as consultants in making the decision to transfer, but felt that in the end she was the one making the decision. Typically, decisions are seen as the student's to make, but they look to their parents to consult or confirm a decision that they are making.

One may argue that regardless of cultural and ethnic background, the broad current generation of students in college typically maintains a strong connection to parents. This argument is best illustrated by the phenomenon of "helicopter parents." Helicopter parents are described as parents, typically of the baby boomer generation, who "hover" over their college-aged child (Colavecchio-Van Sickler, 2006). Parents use technology to further keep ties with their students through text messaging and phone calls. Helicopter parenting tends to focus on the education of a student or the relationship between the parent and institution with the parent taking an active role interceding to advocate on the child's behalf with the institution. In contrast, collective decision-making is interwoven through decisions including but going beyond education and involves not just parents but the entire family in those decisions. The South Asian

culture that links family and child is different than helicopter parenting because it draws from of a cultural norm of consulting family, reaffirming decisions and making collective decisions. Decision-making is done with consultation with family members to re-affirm or reiterate that these decisions are best not only for the student but also for the family as a whole.

Segal (1991) states, “Choice of career is heavily influenced, if not dictated, by the family...high levels of dependency are fostered in the family” (p. 235). Collective interdependence is different than that of the millennial generation because although they may consult their families in making the decision, their decision is still their own. The students in this study felt that their decisions were their own but they still felt the need to please their family

Emelia, a 19-year-old sophomore, further confirms the idea of collective interdependence by stating, “Because that's just how I think our culture is structured. You respect your parents; you constantly look to them to affirm the affirmation.” Emelia was deciding to either live on campus or to move off campus her sophomore year and involved her family in her decision. She had been heavily involved in her residence hall association, but due to family financial concerns, she was considering stepping down from her role since it required that she live on campus. She consulted her parents in making her decision and was disconcerted when a student affairs professional suggested that she ignore her parents’ advice to move off campus:

I guess just throwing caution to the wind and just doing whatever it is that I want to do, I could never do, because I’m just too involved with my family and too involved with the communities that I am a part of to just be my own person. I am my own person; it’s because of what I’ve grown up with, because of what’s engrained in me for the past twenty years of my life. So, there is no way of breaking out of that. It would just be starting my whole life over which I don’t plan on doing.

In this quote, Emelia is describing the collective interdependence with her family in which she wants to be considerate and take into account her family's perspective. Her identity and decision-making are tied to the idea that her parents are a part of her decision-making and the way she deals with difficult situation is not to think independently and disregard how her actions might impact the individuals around her. Both Selina and Emelia explained that their decisions were made and affirmed through consultation with their families. They made interdependent decisions that took into consideration their families' input. This provided them the support and affirmation they needed in making difficult educational decisions such as moving off campus or transferring schools. Emelia made her decision to move off campus to help her family financially even though it meant leaving an organization that she valued. Selina talked about how she viewed her family as a support system to assist in making these difficult decisions:

It's definitely all about family and all about your community and your community helping you become, helping you rise up I think. I've always thought that. And I've also felt kind of bad for people who felt like they have to be on their own or didn't have anybody to support them. Because I've had people support me all my life. I'm kind of babied in that way, but I don't know. It's a good feeling to have those people behind you. I think that's the core value of South Asian culture, definitely to have all these people.

These two women do not make wholly independent decisions; each has invited her family to serve as a sounding board to affirm ideas and decisions. This behavior allowed them to feel supported through a difficult decision-making process and they focused on that positive impact of family involvement. The family role is positive, affirming and engaging. However, such interdependent decision-making may be perceived by others, particularly those who do not share

a common cultural background, as the students being dependent on their parents for those decisions; outsiders may believe that the students have not developed autonomy. Developing autonomy is a goal of many student development theories and is an important developmental stage for young adults (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). On the contrary, many of the students expressed positive aspects of interdependence in their decision-making. They emphasized consulting with or receiving affirmation from their parents, but felt that the ultimate decisions were still theirs to make. The theme of collectivism is showcased in students' focus on decision-making. The students worked with their families to make decisions that were feasible and acceptable to both. The acceptance of decisions made together is important to the students as this affirms the respect for their families. It is important for them to feel as if they are making decisions that will not disappoint, disrespect, or shame their families.

Fear of disappointment and respect for family.

The second theme related to the idea of family impact and influence is that of respect for family and fear of disappointing the family. This theme was reiterated repeatedly in many different conversations with most of the participants. The students focused on the idea that they did not want their decision to disappoint or disrespect the values of their family. Through their decision-making, they wanted to reiterate the importance of respect and honoring the values that their families had instilled in them.

Amy is a senior business major. She describes a decision she made regarding taking a new job in another city:

Part of it is respect. Part of it is just kind of like they're still a part of my life and I don't really want to hurt the relationship that I have with them. That's not to say that I will follow everything that they tell me to do once I am on my own, but at the same time, there's certain little things. That's a very small sacrifice that I would keep to preserve the

relationship with my parents rather than have me nag them like I disapprove of this. That's just kind of unnecessary. I don't need that. It's a bunch of little things. It's kind of like trade-offs if you look at. What am I giving up to get this in return? Is it a big deal to me?

Amy explains that she would argue with or challenge her parents about certain elements of her life but not about others. Her decisions about whether to challenge her parents were largely dependent on whether the particular issue seemed worth the “fight” to her. She explained that she respects her parents’ opinions and values their relationship so she may choose not to argue against their ideas in order to preserve their relationship.

Delilah is a 19-year-old student from a conservative Muslim household. In her interview, she described how she wears traditional clothing, does not apply makeup and adheres to prayer times with her family when she is at home. She does these things to avoid upsetting her mother, who was much stricter in religious practices than Delilah. When away from home, however, she did not adhere to the multiple prayer rule; she explains, “I feel like a lot of us have a lot of pressure from our family to do well. It doesn't come naturally to us. We are raised to do it that way and we don't want to disappoint.” In this quote, Delilah reiterates one of the themes that students often talked about; the fear of disappointing the family. Delilah adheres to the religious practice when she is around her family so as to not disappoint them, but to manages her identity when she is away from them in a different way. She fears disappointing her family but she still makes her own choices, choices that if her family found out about would be a disappointment to them. She is still trying to navigate her own ideas with those of her family and although she may not agree with some of her family's ideas she does not want to cause them to be upset or hurt them.

Delilah has also felt pressure to succeed from her family due to the financial burdens on her family. Her parents are separated so Delilah and her sister have been helping her mother support her family:

I help her with the bills, the checks and stuff and I always see that barely making everything. My sister feels she has to give all the money to my mom. Mom just keeps asking for more... I hope I get a job in my field right away after I can graduate and start helping her out. I have a work study job and I'm also a CA [community assistant] right now.

Delilah is working two jobs in order to assist her family and continue to go to school. Students described how they felt an obligation to their families to succeed due to the sacrifices that their families made to obtain their education. Amy similarly felt pressure about her family, describing her realization:

I think it's just something that I picked up as a kid and it's just the idea that I've seen people who have not had much. Take whatever opportunities they can to at least be something, and I feel like given the opportunities that I have and the fact that my parents struggled so hard, I should be able to do something with myself and to not do anything positive with my education would just be a waste...

Both Amy and Delilah were keenly aware of the sacrifices that their families made in allowing them to obtain their education. Their families stressed the importance of education in making a better life for themselves, which again raised the fear of disappointment. The students did not want to waste their families' hard work by not spending time on furthering their education or wasting time and not taking advantage of the opportunities ahead of them. Many of these burdens were self-imposed, the students want to help their families and did not want to disappoint their families and wanted to showcase a return on their "investment."

Shanti, a biracial student who identifies mostly with her South Asian heritage, spoke about her fear of disappointing her father. She expressed fear of disappointing family members

that went beyond the financial burdens to the idea of trying to making individuals proud of their success. Her father is South Asian, and in this excerpt, she describes the relationship she has with her parents:

They pretty much left things up to [my brother and me] a lot, because my mom was very hands-off and my dad didn't live with us. So he tried to be more hands-off I guess, too. But we still wanted to make them proud, so we still worked hard, but we had the choice of what we did.

Shanti described how she and her brother really wanted to make their parents proud of what they did, especially when it came to school and academics. Similar to other participants, Shanti felt that she had the ability to make her choices, and although she felt obliged to make her parents “proud,” she could still make her own decisions. Shanti felt that she could make her own decisions but had the influence of her family in the back of her mind and did not want to disappoint her family. Shanti describes how her relationship with her father has changed from her perception that he was “strict” to a feeling of respect about his high expectations for her:

With my dad, we have actually drawn closer, because as I've gotten older I feel he has respected me more as an adult and allowed me to make my own decisions. And trusted me too, so it's not like he's strict anymore, it's more he has high expectations in a way. Sometimes I get a little stressed out with that. Besides that, we have a really good relationship and I feel like I have a lot of the same values as him.

Shanti described feeling stressed or worried about not meeting the expectations of her family. She defines the concept of being “strict” as family having more control over where a child might go, having knowledge of the child's activity and having to clear all the child's decisions. Shanti and her brother worried that they could potentially disappoint their families and how that may lead to rifts or challenges with their family.

Similarly, Amy gives an example of feeling pressure to meet expectations from her family about her involvement with music:

I always knew I liked music and I liked singing, so that's why I stuck with it for so long. I guess, I always kind of felt like in some sense I would be – I don't know – disappointing my parents in a way. I think that a lot of it was my own decision, but then in some sense, I probably should've stopped earlier than I did because I could see myself getting increasingly more frustrated with it and not so much putting in the effort that I really should've given it the time and money that is needed to kind of excel in such an artistic form.

Amy did not want to stop participating in the activity because she felt that it would disappoint her parents. Her hesitation was shaped by the influence her family had on her. The students often expressed an obligation to succeed and keep trying harder regardless of the activity because they wanted to show their parents that they could achieve the goals or expectations that their parents set for them.

Sameeha, a 21-year-old senior, describes the pressure created from parental expectations that influences her actions to succeed:

[My parents] did not have these same opportunities that we have for multiple reasons. Now that we are here they also feel that we need to have, the children, we need to have a voice, we need to show ourselves... We can be as great as or even better than other people. So they do hold that to be true.

The requirement of respect and honoring of expectations that students may place on themselves due to the values of their family can sometimes be difficult to manage. The students navigate their personal desires with the contradictory desires of their families. For example, Amy struggled with trying to manage the expectations for her to excel in music and Delilah did not want to pray in the same way her family did at home. The students expressed that they

understood where their families' expectations came from, that they received those messages from a young age, and were the foundation of their family and their value system.

Involvement and career choice were particularly areas in which the students had to manage expectations and navigate their families' expectations. At times, this negotiation is complex, lengthy and discrete. As seen through Delilah, that may mean selectively disclosing information to their families or not being forthright with certain information. Although the students know that withholding information can be harmful to their family, they want to uphold that respect and to not disappoint their loved ones so they keep information hidden, which is very different than just choosing to conform to family expectation.

Involvement choices.

When participants talked about their involvement with student organizations, they expressly noted that family, particularly parents and siblings, impacted their decision-making. Families were influential in students' choices to be involved or not to be involved in certain student organizations. Participants described their decisions as being influenced by past experiences with sibling participation or family history of involvement. Parent influence was notable by their early introduction of family activities, particularly in culturally based functions, during a participant's childhood. Siblings were often role models, so if they were involved in groups that were influential in their experience, their sibling might be interested in joining the same or similar groups. Another perspective might be that the sibling experience may showcase or model a behavior in which they would not like to participate. Natalie, a senior public health major, offers one example of this when she talks about her choice of involvement outside of culturally based organizations:

I just feel like there is a lot of opportunity everywhere and I just don't want to stick with one thing. And even if I was in the cultural organization and I stuck with it, I don't feel it's the only thing I could have done. Also, another thing that I saw was when my brother went to college, he was in an Indian fraternity and it also turned me off to it because I notice that he doesn't really go outside of it, he settled for that.

Natalie wanted to participate in a larger array of organizations and was deterred from involvement with South Asian student organizations because she felt that would be limiting based on her brother's experience. She was affected by her brother's behavior, which she found to be uncomfortably limiting by his choice to participate only in a culturally based fraternity. She wanted to expand her experience in college beyond culturally based organizations as they might limit the diversity of people she could meet and befriend. Natalie hoped to expand her experience to different areas of involvement and felt that joining culturally based groups would consume her time with the one organization and would limit the variety of friends that she would make. She wanted to expand her circle of friends beyond the South Asian community on campus.

Siblings' experience is one example of family influence, but another is parental influence. Prashantkumar talked in his interview about how his parents were supportive of most of his extracurricular activities, except when it came to his controversial plan to explore a different religion. Prashantkumar had recently become involved with a Christian organization on campus and was using that experience to explore other religious ideas outside of Hinduism, his family's faith.

I really like these types of things and my parents have always been supportive of different activities I've done. They never forced me to do anything or forced me to quit anything. I think they kind of just let me branch out into my own... When it came to the religious discussion they became kind of sensitive, not something, they didn't like that very much. But, when it came to other things, like Model UN and stuff they didn't have a problem with me doing it. They weren't like you got to focus on school. They were really open to me doing all sorts of different activities.

Although his parents encouraged him to participate outside of the classroom, they were skeptical about the focus on a religion different than the one in which he was raised. His participation concerned his parents, but he still continued to attend meetings despite his parents' disapproval. This is an example of how Prashantkumar was able to navigate interdependence. He was able to understand the issues and concerns from his family but still made a decision that he felt was best for him. His family may not agree with the decision but Prashantkumar still navigated that tough decision with them, made his own choice, but also decided that withholding some information about his exploration of religion would be respectful.

Amy also felt pressure from her parents about her involvement in high school, but her parents' concerns focused more on time taken away from her academics:

I also did marching band for a year in high school. My mom pressured me to quit because it was taking up a lot of my time away from schoolwork and stuff. That was something that she wasn't really happy about and there was a lot going on at home and stuff, so she... Basically, it was too much for her to handle in terms of picking me up, dropping me off to practices because it would be almost every single day of the week. That's basically why, I guess, I chose to join the *a cappella* group because I've always liked being involved in music.

With Amy and other students, their major focus in school was on their academics and involvement became secondary. Because it was a difficult situation for Amy's mother to pick her up and drop her off, they made the decision to focus on studies and decided that her involvement might be too difficult on the family and distracting from academics. In what she saw as a compromise, Amy chose a different activity in music that would allow her more time to focus on her academics. Amy reiterated that point when asked if her parents had an influence on what she got involved with:

Not really my decision to be involved in different things, but I think, like I mentioned, the emphasis of education that parents always put on me, and I know there's like a stereotype that all Asians are good at school. It's not like that obviously, but at least my family really enforced the importance of education.

The importance of academics is a message that was reiterated to Amy and many of the other participants. Amy was influenced by her family to shift her interest in music from a more time-intensive student organization to one which was less time intensive and allowed her family to not be as inconvenienced by her travel. This is another example of South Asian students being respectful of their family and examining a situation that would be best for the entire family rather than their individual interest.

Families also had an influence in the type of organization the students' participated in. They recognized some organizations, like honors societies, as beneficial to students' academic pursuits. Sameeha describes her family's focus on education and academics when she was invited to join certain groups:

As far as the Honors Societies, because being a Pakistani or Desi as everyone says, it always was about getting to the next step; achieving being in those Honors Societies. Those, yes, I would definitely say when the letter would come home, I would show my mom and the first thing she say, yeah, join it, it doesn't matter how much money it is. It's going to be something good on your résumé, or transcript, then go for it.

Here, the activity is seen as something of value to differentiate their child from other students. The idea of being invited to join an honor society is an indication of success for the parents, and it is an achievement in which they can take pride and can share with their community. In the South Asian community, the child's accomplishments are a source of success for the parents. One might be viewed as a better parent based on the success of their child and that success is also a large part of how others view not only the child but also their collective family. If parents

are able to demonstrate that their child is an actively engaged student is an honor society, they may gain improved social standing or potential mobility for the family and child as they arrange a marriage.

Family influence is an important part of the South Asian culture, and as shown through these themes, can take shape in a number of different ways through small influences and larger patterns of decision-making. The focus on the family and their influence will be reiterated within the themes of ethnic identity and the emphasis on academic and career choices as well. The South Asian family is an important aspect of the South Asian college student and navigating those ties can be helpful in counseling students that may have difficult decisions to make. As indicated through the students' stories we see that the students have an interdependent connection with their families and that the child navigates interdependence by communicating with their family.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity as defined by Sodowsky, Kwan and Pannu (1995) has multiple parts including “(a) concerns about one’s attachment to, sense of belonging to, and identification with one’s ethnic group members (e.g. Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian) and with one’s ethnic culture; (b) does not have a theoretical emphasis on one’s ethnic culture; but (c) may include the prejudices and cultural pressures that ethnic individual’s experience when their ways of life come into conflict with those of the White dominant group” (p. 133). The ethnic identity of the participants is an important aspect of the South Asian college student identity. The participants used a variety of terminologies to describe their ethnic identities and that had an impact on how they viewed themselves, how they viewed others and how others may have perceived them.

There are three subthemes for ethnic identity are terms, cultural vs. non-cultural involvement and token/model minority.

Terminology.

In my initial survey to students (Appendix G), I asked an open-ended question of ethnic identity. I did not provide them with any specific options or language in order to see what language they used to define themselves and their ethnic identity. Again in our interview, I purposefully made the question about ethnic identity vague to see how they would respond. The students used a variety of terms that are discussed in this section.

Some of the students used terms that were broader such as South Asian. Amy answered:

Yeah. I always just say Asian Indian?... Not Asian. I'll tell people that I'm Indian, but if someone is like, oh, are you South Asian, or if I'm referring to people in a general sense, like people who are from Pakistan, India, or Bangladesh as a group, then I'll use a term like South Asian, but I'm referring to myself, it's just easier to say Indian. I don't know if it's just because it's less of a mouthful but it's also like a little bit more specific.

Amy used the terms Indian to further clarify her family's country origin rather than the broader term Asian. She clarifies that she does use the term South Asian to refer to the general population of individuals from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Ket also described himself in more general terms:

Ethnically I tend to respond that I'm South Asian. If they keep prodding I'll say, that I'm Indian. And then I don't really like when people ask beyond that, because then it's implying that I wasn't born in. Or that I'm from somewhere that I have never been. But usually I'll identify as South Asian-American or Indian-American.

This is an important quote since it focuses on American-ness and his concern about where he was born – that's crucial to ethnic identity for second-generation South Asian college students. Some participants would specify further their family's country of origin if asked, but most felt that the term South Asian encompasses the diaspora. Selina, whose parents were born in

Bangladesh talks about how she struggles with the terminology of ethnic identity considering her many interests in the culture of different countries that are under the term “South Asia:”

But I still, I don't know. It's a weird question. I mostly see myself as South Asian because I'm so engrossed in all these different types of dance... I'm interested in all Indian dances, all types... all these things I find myself to enjoy them a lot. And I mean I wear like Pakistani clothes, shalwar kameez. So it's like, I feel like I'm a citizen of, not like a citizen but I'm South Asian mostly.

Selina has family in both India and Bangladesh and so she uses the term South Asian to be more encompassing of her family and the cultural elements of her identity. She was able to articulate the different influences her family and her interest in the culture that allowed her to feel that the term South Asian was more encompassing of her overall identity.

Another broad term that was used frequently by the students was “brown.” This term references the brown shades of the South Asian skin color. In India, the idea of beauty is based on the fairness of the skin color of the individual. The lighter one's skin color is the more “fair” or beautiful one is (Picton, 2013). Selina describes how the term is currently being used.

I told my parents that term once. They are like “brown?” So, I'm pretty sure it's like a younger generation type thing, because... and especially in America. I'm pretty sure or maybe just not in South Asia. They don't say we are brown in South Asia. I don't think. Honestly I think it's a unifying thing, it's like we are all brown, oh look at that brown person. You don't know where they are actually from. But they look like you.... I think Desi is a term like that, but I don't use that personally. My brother uses that term. My brother who is married 35 years old. He uses that terms so I feel like it was really like all of his friends use it, my sister-in-law uses it. They don't really say brown.

Mamta Accapadi (2012), writing on Asian American Identity Consciousness, focuses on the term Desi: “Some South Asian students raised the concern that they (or their families) did not identify with the term South Asian and recommended that we use the term Desi which more broadly encompassed South Asian diaspora” (p. 79). Conversely, the students in this study have

embraced the term “South Asian” and “brown” more so than “Desi.” Similar to other words, terminology shifts, the use of “brown” may be the more slang or generational term of this group. “Brown” came up as a term that other students used to identify themselves when asked the probing questions. Selina and Brian both used the term as a casual reference and when pressed further about other terms they used in describing themselves. Selina said “I’m brown. If you don’t want to dig so deep into it, you just say, I’m brown. It’s kind of more like casual than saying South Asian, I think.” The participants used the term “brown” instead of “Desi,” which has become popular amongst the South Asian community. “Brown” seems to be the term that encompasses the group and to help others identify as a group physically.

Another way that the participants identified themselves was through their family’s country of origin. Raj described how he and his sister when traveling struggled with questions about nationality on their immigration forms. They always wanted to write Indian, because although they were born and raised in the US and are American citizens they feel as if they are Indian. When asked to describe terms he used to describe himself he stated, “I would say I’m Indian. My nationality, I’m American legally, but my values and my way of thinking, I don’t know I just grew up as an Indian person living in America so I like to think that.” Raj’s story showcases the struggle of duality of South Asian students raised in America. They may consider themselves Indian or South Asian culturally, but their nationality or physical location is American. The students described a feeling of being part of both the American and South Asian culture, since all of our students were born in the United States. They note feeling a tug towards the culture in which they were raised in their homes and that of their school and day-to-day

interactions outside the home. The values and ideas of each of these might be different and conflicting at times. The students talked about having to learn how to navigate these conflicts.

This duality of their cultural identity does not just happen in the US but can happen when they are back in the family's country of origin. Family members in their countries of origin see the students as being American because they may not be able to speak the language as well or may have different ways of doing things than their families at home, but the student still perceive themselves as identifying with that country and the culture. Sonya talks about going back to India, her family's country of origin, and how she is perceived differently than when she is in the US:

When I go to India though and meet some people I might say I'm American, because for them they don't get why I'm not speaking their language. So then I'll say I'm American. But here probably I'll probably say I'm mostly Indian because it's a big part of me, so I really feel it. I never define myself as that. I never consciously thought about it.

Sonya describes how in different places she defines herself differently due to her upbringing in the US. The struggle of being a second generation immigrant is very evident here in the way that the individuals feel as if they may not be fully accepted in either the US or their parent's country of origin due to the two cultures in which they are immersed.

No matter the label, or word that the students select to describe themselves, it has an impact on their identity. Participants in the study described how their culture has a huge influence and impact on how they "label" themselves. Shanti, who is biracial, describes how her culture has an impact on her identity.

Indian influence, culture is a big part of my life, but I don't really like define myself as that label. Because it's not somebody that takes over my life, or that's in every part of my life, it's just one part of my life. So, I wouldn't label it as one way to describe Shanti as Indian [because] it doesn't describe so many things about me. It describes one small part about me. Whereas people who are more involved in their Indian culture and have

all Indian friends and all Indian blah, blah, blah, they might consider that a core or part of who they are...And I do think being Indian is part of who I am, but I would never use that as a way to explain who I am, because there is so much more to me.

Shanti describes how Indian culture has an impact on her identity but it is only one aspect of her whole identity. Although she does not define herself as being Indian all the time, she does talk about how the culture had an impact on who she is and her identity. Sameeha describes the difference between her country of birth and her cultural influences and that duality in her quote below.

So being that I was born in America, the ideal answer is American-Pakistani, because that's the correct answer I would say. But as far as how I associate myself, I would say I'm a Pakistani-American. Because my culture plays a huge role in my life as far as at home we speak Urdu, which is the language of Pakistan. I wear ethnic clothes. I visit the country often. I'm going again in May, so my whole family is actually there. So, I would... the correct answer is that, but I would definitely put Pakistani before American for myself at least.

Shankar and Balgopal (2001, as cited in Accapadi, 2012, p. 73) describe how ethnic markers that include religious practice, cultural norms and language can influence ethnic identity. In the case of Sameeha, the ethnic markers are language and clothing. While for Shanti, it is more about cultural norms that may impact her identity. Brian talks about the ethnic marker of religion and how he does not feel as connected with the Indian culture due to the fact that he is not religious. "I think because I've been in that cultural group for a while. I guess we probably just talk about it and 'it's kind of tough because I don't really connect with my religion too much, just because that's how I am now. A lot of my friends describe me as whitewashed." The affiliation with ethnic markers shows how students may quantify how 'Indian' or 'Pakistani' they are compared to their affiliation with being 'American.' Similar to Shanti, Brian felt that because he was not as involved in cultural or religious elements, he felt more dissociated from Indian culture and

was considered more ‘whitewashed.’ Pyke and Dang (2003) define ‘whitewash’ as a term for individuals who have kept some of their ethnic practices but have largely assimilated to the mainstream culture. They may have largely non-Asian friends, do not speak the language regularly with peers and date non-Asians.

Whitewashed was a term that the students used for individuals that they felt were more “Americanized” or more “White.” I found it interesting that the students used the term “whitewashed,” which essentially meant more White or Caucasian in their actions, and used “Brown,” which as a physical description of someone who is South Asian and tend to have more pigment in their skin. Brown was not considered a negative term, but whitewashed was considered to have a more negative connotation. It could be due to a number of different reasons, such as being considered more “white” could be leaning away from their ethnic identity of being “brown.” I asked Ket to describe the difference when one is considered to be ‘whitewashed’ since others had described him through that term.

I’d say a few different things. I think one thing really is how I interact with my family at home. I can really talk openly with my mother about alcohol, dating whomever I want, anything like that. Or even things like if I have gay friends or something like that, that’s all stuff that I can bring up at home in a safe space and not necessarily in a negative way. But I do have a lot of South Asian friends who would be like; oh you talk to your mom about that that’s allowed? Like they don’t kick you out of the house the second you mention something like that? So they assume that Indian’s just don’t talk about this.

Ket feels that he is able to talk more freely and have more open conversations with his family about topics that are not as culturally acceptable topics or that do not meet the cultural norms of being South Asian. South Asian culture is traditionally more conservative, particularly about issues of alcohol or romantic relationships.

Amy described her experience going to orientation at her new job in a large business company that recruited her. She was one of the few South Asian recruits, all of whom were from her school. She described the other South Asians she met from the firm as being all “whitewashed” and alluded to the fact that may have been part of the reason those individuals were chosen for the position due to the fact that they acted more culturally “American” or white. The term was not always used in the most positive way but it can be used positively, it really depends on the student and the context they are giving for the situation. It has been used to name individuals who may not be “Indian” enough or ethnic enough. It can be hard for students who do identify with their culture but may not be as affiliated with organizations to manage that identity in a more visible way. I will discuss this concept more when I talk about the idea of culturally-based versus non-culturally-based student organizations.

In this section I explored a number of terms that the participants used to describe themselves as a way to consider their ethnic identity, their country of origin, South Asian diaspora terms, and other slang terms to represent South Asians. The students used different terms that describe their identity based on their identity development and how they were raised. Accapadi (2012) describes some of these factors in her APIDA identity consciousness model (Appendix F) and we see those common themes with the participants in this study. These ethnic markers have a large influence, as do social norms. One of the issues that arose was the ethnicity check box that individuals have to fill out on tests or forms. Sameeha described her experience in these terms:

I have used, on surveys, anytime I get a survey it’s always Asian/Pacific Islander, because that’s the closest I can get. When they get specific sometimes Pakistani is written on it so I’ll check that off. If it’s ever possible I do Southeast Asian to get close to it also. But the majority of the time, 90% of the time, it’s always Asian.

The participants talked about being lumped together but also recognizing the differences in their own identities and culture that make them unique. The duality of their culture between family and the ethnic markers of their American affiliation can sometimes lead to the need to navigate identity. Emelia describes that duality in a poetic way, “When they do remix music so it’s the Indian songs remixed with current American song. It almost feels more appropriate for me. It’s a little bit of both, because just one or the other is just too extreme for me. I don’t listen to exclusively American music, but I don’t listen to exclusively Indian music, but when I hear them together it just fits.” Most participants in their interviews discussed the blending of the two cultures and the duality of the cultures. This duality was an important factor in how they perceived themselves and also how others perceived them. It was a factor in how they seemed to fit into different organizations and the decision-making they made in regards to choosing organizations on campus.

Culturally-based organizations versus non-culturally-based organizations.

One of the main conclusions that emerged from the interview process concerned students’ choices regarding joining culturally-based versus non-culturally-based student organizations. The individuals selected for the study had a combination of involvements - some were involved with culturally-based student organizations and other students were not and that was part of the selection process of participants. The individuals involved in culturally-based student groups were involved with religious based organizations, and culturally-based dance and music groups. One student was also a member of a traditionally South Asian fraternity (see Table of Participants). The university has over 18 South Asian student organizations, which included religious, dance, music, social, and academic groups. The students who participated in culturally-

based student organizations were not involved in culturally-based groups exclusively; they were often involved in other non-culturally-based groups such as sports or academic organizations.

Students who did not participate in any culturally-based student organizations expressed an idea of being “othered.” Othered is defined as not being inclusive and excluding individuals. Participants talked about individuals within the South Asian organizations viewing them as not being “South Asian enough” if they did not join or were not involved in culturally-based groups. Furthermore, they felt that those students who were involved in South Asian groups perceived them to be negatively “whitewashed”. Ket, who is not involved in South Asian ethnically oriented groups, describes his experience about attending South Asian events on campus:

I get the impression it's kind of South Asian events for South Asians and of course, everyone is welcome to come. But there is this element of exclusion or element of this is for South Asian people. And you need to really understand how our particular cultural values and things like this really participate and get something out of it. And I guess to me, the South Asian identity is a lot looser of a thing. But outside of those, then I see ones that are very heavily cultural, and to me that suggest that there is some kind of Indian cultural norm or South Asian cultural norm that you need to fit in.

Ket talked further about how because he was not involved in student groups that he was not considered as “heavily cultural” and that he did not fit the South Asian cultural norm that some of the culturally based groups used as a benchmark. He felt that because he did not join the culturally-based groups that he was perceived to be not as cultured; as a result he felt excluded from attending the culturally-based events. He sees his South Asian identity to be beyond the involvement in culturally-based organizations. I will explore that topic further in this section.

Natalie, similarly to Ket, chose not to be involved with culturally-based groups because of the idea of cliques and not feeling included in the group:

I was either in a group or I was out. That's the vibe I kind of got off it. So, coming into college, I'm just going to be friends with everyone, I just don't want to get stuck into... because [at] a big Asian school and people think they are going to conform to whatever we see I feel like it's cliquey, because people are going to go to what they know.

Natalie wanted to expand her sense of community and friends so she chose not to get involved with culturally based student groups and instead found her sense of belonging and community through her interest in community service. She chose to find her friends through those organizations and described her friends as racially diverse. Her perception was that if she chose to get involved with a culturally based group that she would be limiting herself to South Asian friendships.

Raj, on the other hand, chose to be involved with a South Asian fraternity. His sense of community and friendship came through the fraternity. He describes one of the reasons he chose the group was because he identified with them culturally:

And a couple of them were brothers at [South Asian based fraternity] and they introduced me to the fraternity members and I got along with them very well. They are a perfect mix of American and Desi I think. So, it's like me, yeah. And everyone is really unique there is no really like Grindian. There's no like really a clique or something. Everyone has his or her own style.

Raj mentions that the members of the group are unique but still have a sense of South Asian identity that is similar to his and his acculturation. He also mentions that his fraternity is not a clique, which the other students who are not involved in culturally based student organizations mentioned was their perception of culturally based groups. Raj found his sense of belonging through his involvement in the group and felt that they understood who he was as a person ethnically and culturally. He also used the term Grindian – a term not known at the start of the research. This term was used to describe a male student who was “Guido” and Indian. Guido is

a term that is sometimes used derogatorily, to describe Italian Americans in the metropolitan New York area. They stereotypically wear their hair jelled and are interested in fast cars. The show “Jersey Shore” on MTV had a number of individuals who were described as “Guido.” Raj does not feel that he belongs with the “Grindian” subset of individuals yet his fraternity enables him to feel a sense of community with other males who have similar cultural and social norms.

Raj goes further to describe his friends:

Almost everyone I’m friends with now is Indian. Actually it’s not; I’d say a good 80% of my friends are Indian. Not that I don’t like meshing with white, black, Asian. I love Asian people, I speak Chinese. But, I feel more comfortable having a conversation with Indian person just because we’re grown up the same way, we have very similar mindsets.

Raj’s friends are all similar in that they are Indian. He is interested in different cultures, such as the Chinese culture and language as he is studying that language, but his sense of community and identity revolves around his South Asian identity. He surrounds himself with Indian friends because he feels comfortable and engages in conversations with individuals that have similar understandings and cultural values. In college, students often use student organizations as a means of finding like-minded friends and individuals. Both Natalie and Raj found their like-minded friends in different ways, one from a community service group and the other through a culturally based fraternity. They both sought connections to other students and looked for a sense of community. They found those connections through different areas of involvement.

For some of the students, being affiliated with culturally based student organizations was not the only way they expressed their South Asian identity. In many cases, students not affiliated with culturally based student organization felt “othered.” Furthermore, by not being involved with ethnically oriented student organizations they felt they did not connect with their South

Asian culture. However, Reena talks about her connection with her South Asian culture but does not feel the need to be surrounded by individuals who are like her culturally. This is similar to what Natalie and Ket said earlier about not having their ethnic identity tied to their involvement:

Growing up I even more I tried to disassociate from being Indian. I was always friends with white people. Even now I don't have as many Indian friends. But I have learned to appreciate my culture more that I'm not surrounded by people who are just like those kinds of people.

Reena joined numerous groups that were not culturally based but still largely identifies with her South Asian identity. She spoke about her involvement in community service as a way of expanding her ideas, and exposure to other ethnicities as a way of exploring ideas outside of the traditional South Asian culture. Reena talks more about how community service is important to her but her family friends may not understand that involvement in the same way:

I think it's because I want more for myself than to just be like a woman, an Indian woman with a career, and like two kids and a husband. Like thirty years down the road. That's not all I want and especially like the organizations that I'm part of; I have so many family/friends. My parent's friends ask me why you care about that kind of stuff. Or, why is volunteering important, they don't understand. But I think those are the ways that I've grown the most as a person. And it's not been through participating in only Indian things or stuff like that. But I mean everyone is different and I know a lot of people who have grown in a different kind of way.

In this quote, Reena describes the struggle that some students have in explaining to others that they can grow and develop, still respect their South Asian roots, and not be involved with just culturally based groups. Her South Asian identity does not have to define her involvement. She obtained a sense of community and belonging through her involvement with community service organizations. Reena also talked about gaining ideas and growing in a different way and that maybe her way of exploring her identity and community. Through her involvement in different

types of activities she found a way to expand her ideas beyond the cultural norms to which she had become accustomed.

Kimberly who is involved with community service, club sports and a social sorority, chose not to participate in culturally based student organizations. She chose to get involved with her community service organization and found a connection to the campus, community, as well as made friendships through her social sorority at the university.

Even though I do have friends here that are very involved with that kind of stuff [culturally based organizations], it's just like at Rutgers it just doesn't appeal to me as much as it did at home. I don't feel like the need to go to the shows here and stuff, because I like going home and seeing my parent's friends and going to functions at home.

Kimberly found that she liked attending culturally based events with her parents. Her sense of community at home revolves more around the culturally based groups that her family is involved with. She enjoys the fact that she can share that experience with her family and does not feel the need to be involved while at school. Similarly, Becky, who is involved heavily with her church at home, found her sense of community at the university through her community service organization but chose not to engage in religion on campus, rather she maintained her relationship with church through her home church. In these two cases, individuals are still involved in culturally based organizations, but their involvement may not be obvious to other students as they are involved with these organizations outside of the campus.

Tokenism and model minority.

Within ethnic identity of South Asian college students, one element that was explored with the students was the idea of being a "token," the only South Asian person doing something. Ket described the idea of being a token:

I would say I'm very actively conscious of the fact that sometimes I am one of the only, or one of the very few South Asians participating in any particular thing. And I guess it's just something that I'm aware of. I don't know that I actively do anything about it, but I think about it.

Ket experienced this as one of the few South Asian students who has chosen political science as a major and through his involvement in honor societies related to his major. He did not see professors or mentors in the political science department that looked like him. There were no individuals similar to him or that paved the way for him. Staff and faculty may not see the need to assist the South Asian students in identifying role models and mentors from the South Asian culture because they see them as a model minority and assume they already have knowledge about these areas of academic involvement. In reality, in disciplines other than the sciences or other stereotypical South Asian majors, students often do not have the cultural capital to work with those areas. Despite their low numbers in these disciplines they also may not be considered for "minority" programs for support. Amy describes her thoughts about this:

I feel like ethnicity is almost like clumped to that group of Asian because almost like those forms are considered... For the purpose of diversity hiring, recruitment, and stuff like that and because we are considered a model minority, there is almost like a disregard to that.

South Asian students may not perceive themselves as being minorities or feel that they should be considered for these items because a lack of information or due to their own perceptions that they should not be involved in these areas.

Amy described her feelings about being involved with a first year academic program in which she was the only student of color who was peer teaching that particular topic:

I would say the one big thing is I often times feel it's still almost a novelty in terms of if I'm say teaching the Law and Leadership group, the Law and Leadership class for FIGS. Say there were five of us teaching Law and Leadership that year; then I'm the one non-white person in that kind of cohort. And that doesn't stop me from doing anything, but I

also almost feel like a trailblazer in some ways and I also most feel like okay there might be people in the future who are also interested in this sort of position. I'd better do a good job at this to show this is a valid way to go about things.

Amy did not feel intimidated by the fact that she was the only South Asian student doing this particular topic but she was aware of the fact that she was the only one who was participating in this experience. She felt she might be a role model to other South Asians in the future who could be interested in this type of involvement. She enjoyed her involvement as an academic peer instructor and was able to pave the way for other students who might be interested in the same topic or area.

Childhood Involvement

The next theme is childhood involvement. Childhood involvement played an integral role in the decision-making related to organizational involvement. Students described how their childhood experiences led to some of the passions and interests they continued in college. Research interviews demonstrated that community building and continuation of childhood passions are crucial elements affecting the student's decision-making about their types of involvement.

Many study participants continued to pursue involvement they started during their K-12 years. Kimberly described how she was considering going to school on a scholarship for soccer. She had been recruited at a number of highly competitive Ivy League Division III soccer programs. Her parents were concerned about whether she would be able to balance being an athlete with her pre-medicine responsibilities. After a competitive application process, a highly competitive academic program school that included a soccer program did not accept her, however she was accepted to a school that had a soccer program, but the institution did not have

the high academic standards and major she was looking to pursue. She decided to attend the large research university where she could pursue her major and focus on her academics:

I joined this year; I didn't join as a freshman because I was mainly injured. And since I was supposed to go to another school for soccer I didn't want to play my freshman year because I couldn't go to that school. So I started this year. It's a lot of fun. Actually pretty good time too.

Kimberly's involvement with soccer in college developed from her childhood involvement as a player. Even though she felt frustration because she could not continue in the way she wanted with soccer, she was able to manage that transition to continue to follow her passion of soccer later. Kimberly needed some time to process the fact that she was not going to continue with soccer and to recover from her injury. In this case her decision to not attend the school that had soccer for a stronger academic program was something that she navigated with her family.

Kimberly made decisions with her family about how to continue with her love of soccer through intramurals and manage her schoolwork. This also allowed her to continue to be involved with her other passion for community service, also an interest from high school:

In high school I feel like the same as now, in terms of I was always a busy... In high school I played soccer for four years. I did a little bit of track and basketball. I was into community service, but I really didn't understand the impact of it at that time. I volunteered at a hospital for three years and I was in Key Club that is a community service base.

Kimberly described her college experience in community service with great enthusiasm. She showcased how it impacted her college experience and how it allowed her to build connections to campus.

The students found that college involvements that built upon their childhood activities helped them build connections to their campus community. Many came from small high schools in which they had the same friends for years. Attending a larger institution was important to

them as it gave them more options and allowed them to find familiar organizations to continue to pursue their passions. Students described the organizations they were involved with as connections to campus and felt that they allowed them to obtain friends and develop a sense of community at a large school. The academic and social connections allowed them to meet a larger group of like-minded individuals.

Selina, a sophomore exercise science major, recognized that her sense of community and connection to college came through her participation with the Asian *a cappella* group and the Bengali student organization. Selina's connection with culturally oriented activities stemmed from her family's involvement in their cultural community while she was growing up:

There was always this huge Bengali community in Delaware Valley area. So, it was literally called Bangladesh Association of Delaware Valley. It's like South Jersey, Philly area and Delaware. I think that's what definitely what drew me toward all this cultural stuff all these shows. Because basically they were just big functions where all these people get together when they shared in the culture

Selina described that her parents were similarly very involved with the organization; she described her father as "super cultural" and credited him as the origin of her interest in culturally oriented activities. She was able to draw upon her experiences and interests from childhood and continue them. She describes how her parents had modeled the way for them to be involved.

"They would always take us to these events. My dad was the president of that committee for a year. It was like a big deal. So me and my friends we just grew up watching people on stage - dancing all these older people just dancing on stage. We want to do that. So we did." The interest in culturally based dancing and music continued with her involvement in college with the Asian *a cappella* group and the Bengali student organization. She has continued her passion of music and dance through the two organizations.

Similarly, Amy also started to be interested in music during middle school and high school:

For *a cappella*, that really stemmed from just singing from the time I was in middle school to high school. As I said, music was always part of my life and especially singing Carnatic music... I loved to do it. That's basically what drew me to that. My sister went to Penn, so she introduced me to Penn Masala, and I was always... I really just loved the way that people could blend their voices together and create something that sounded so great. That was the whole music thing.

When Amy first got involved on campus, she chose to participate in the South Asian *a cappella* group and student government. Later she became involved with Model UN and other activities, based on her experiences with other non-culturally based groups and feeling disconnected to the South Asian *a cappella* group. Amy also pursued Carnatic music, a traditional South Asian vocal music that can be religious in nature; this where her passion for music began as a child. She continued to pursue music but chose not to continue with a group in which she did not feel comfortable or connected.

Sonya's story illustrates the possibility of students' college involvement extending outside of college. Sonya is a senior who was involved with a variety of culturally-based organizations. Her affiliation with a religious organization started when she was a child and continued throughout high school and into college. The university did not recognize the organization, but Sonya remained actively involved with the group and it was an important part of her college experience. Sonya described how it was time-consuming for her to continue her involvement with the organization at home while at the university. Sonya was involved with organizations both on and off campus; she joined a business fraternity and remained actively involved in an off-campus religious organization. Her participation in the religious organization

is integral to her holistic college experience but is not considered formal campus involvement. Her story illustrates how many students maintain relationships they began in childhood with outside cultural or religious organizations that are as important and impactful as the organizations they engage with on campus.

Becky, a sophomore cell biology and neuroscience major, is involved with a South Asian dance organization and a community service fraternity. She discussed her involvement: “In high school I learned dance and I taught dance. That was the major thing that I did. And then I also got involved in National Honors Society, volunteering. Volunteer at the hospital. I did some internship’s at some places like doctors’ offices, physical therapy clinics.” She was involved with organizations in high school that were related to Indian dance and she continued that when she went to college. When asked about her involvement in college she describes her experience and her quest to diversify her community:

I’ve been raised with a lot of Indian stuff around me. My church, everything I do is pretty much Indian. Even at Rutgers I tried staying away from it, but I ended up coming back to it. Since I joined the dancing here I ended up being friends with a lot of Indian people here, too. I’m in a frat and I kind of joined that, one for community service and another is to make friends that aren’t all Indian. I have other friends obviously of different cultures, but a majority of my friends are Indian, so that’s why I joined the fraternity.

Betsy was involved in culturally based organizations growing up through her involvement in a South Asian Catholic church. She was also involved with community service and organizations related to college majors she was considering. In college, she continued with her involvement in community service, but seemed to struggle with finding her community at college. She stated that she “tried to stay away from [the South Asian community], but ended up coming back to it.” While making decisions about their involvement, students looked to communities and

organizations in which they felt comfortable and with which they may already have common connections, which in Betsy's case were her South Asian roots and her interest in community service. Betsy found her sense of community within the South Asian cultural group but has also navigated being involved with other groups that are not culturally based to help expand her circle of friends and her involvement on campus.

Childhood involvement is an important decision-making factor on students' college involvements. Students described how their involvement during childhood impacted their decisions regarding involvements to pursue in college. This is true of both culturally-based and non-culturally-based student organizations. Furthermore, students whose family and social circle did not have a focus on culturally-based activities were those who tended not become involved with culturally-based organizations in college.

The students who were involved with culturally-based activities during childhood tended to continue that involvement in higher education partially due to the community building and sense of comfort with individuals who had similar ideas about culture and ethnicity. When asked about their main reason for continuing with a group, students described the sense of community and friendship. Students sought that connection and sense of community and sense of belonging in college. This sense of belonging increases their connection to the university, allows them to create friendships, and builds support systems that will help them navigate the university.

Childhood involvement predicated for many of the student's passion for different areas of involvement. In the next section I will examine how ethnic identity also has an impact on that involvement.

Focus on Academic and Career Choice

The focus of this study is on student involvement. One of the major reasons students became involved in certain groups was due to their academic and career choices. Students often chose student organizations they felt could further their academic goals and possible career choices. Involvement in these groups allowed students to network, created opportunities to showcase their high academic standards, and allowed them to connect with possible employers. Students routinely cited the many stereotypes about South Asian students and their career choices in their conversations. Some of the stereotypes they discussed included choosing STEM (science, technology, engineering or math) related majors or choosing business and not liberal arts degree programs (Traxler, 2009). Culturally, some of these majors are chosen due to the clear pathway of success in the field. They can easily be translated into historically high-paying professions that South Asian families have seen as successful. The participants described their decision-making about majors and career choices and how their families impacted their decision-making through conversations and messages that were discussed from a young age.

Ket was a political science major and at the time of the interviews was applying to very competitive Ph.D. programs in political science. Both his parents earned their Ph.D.s in natural sciences fields and they wanted Ket to pursue a career in medicine. But, at a young age, he decided medicine was not his preferred career choice:

I made it clear I don't feel like doing that [premed]. And this is when I was 12 or 13, or whatever. I said I don't know what I want to do; I know I don't want to do that. They were okay with it to the extent that they didn't try to shove me in any particular way and by the time I was choosing my majors they didn't really... it's not that they didn't give in, but if I asked advice obviously they tell me but they didn't tell me you can't do that or anything like that.

For Ket, his parents' personal career choice framed his decision to do something different. His decision-making was embedded, situated, and interdependent and it allowed him early on to explain and set the foundation to choose a different major in his future. He was able to navigate distinguishing his parent's expectations from his own by explaining this idea of a non-science major when he was younger. He had conversations with his parents before attending college, explaining how he would potentially navigate the decision-making to choose a major.

Natalie, similarly, felt an influence from her parents to choose a science-oriented career at a young age. She explains, "I don't feel like my parents pressured me to do the pre-med route, but the influence was somewhat there. It was in my mind that I know that they preferred me to do that. I don't know I didn't really take anything else that seriously than I did with science I guess." She is a public health major who was applying to graduate programs in environmental and occupational health at the time of the interview. Although, she was not applying to medical school, which was her original plan, she focused on continuing in the sciences. Natalie showed that the family impacted her choice although she chose her own major. She acknowledged that her parents instilled the value of a science-based career in her. She, like Ket, used interdependence to negotiate and navigate the expectations of their families and to find ways to create success within family expectations. They are both negotiating and navigating the dialectic of freedom and are neither autonomous nor dependent. Natalie and Ket spoke to their parents about their possible majors; Ket had to advocate for his major choice. His parents knew early on that he was not interested in the sciences, but he had to navigate and defend to his family why he chose the career he did. He did this with some autonomy but did not eliminate the influence of his family, as he wanted their approval. Natalie saw the impact of her family's influence of

science majors in how she made her decision to become a science major. She made the decision to become a science major due to both her family's interest and her own interest. Natalie chose to go to a master's program rather than medical school because it aligns with her interests and her family's goals for her but the decision was still hers to make and navigate.

Sahil, a first-year student with a major in cell biology and neuroscience, states, "My parents haven't forced me to go into medicine, but they just wanted me to go into a career that I was passionate about and was well paying I guess." The participants talked extensively about wanting to achieve the expectations of their parents, including economic stability and success in the effort to achieve a better life. In addition to exemplifying the importance of family in career and academic choice, this is a further example of the idea of respecting family and the fear of disappointing them by choosing majors that are not aligned with their ideas of success.

The participants defined the concept of success in different ways. For Ket, success was to go to graduate school. Although his parents may have had difficulty with accepting his plan to be a non-science major, they also were able to recognize his success through his choice to attend graduate school and obtain a higher degree. Although Natalie did not attend medical school as her family initially wished, her choice to attend graduate school to achieve a good job was a decision they could support.

Traditionally, in the South Asian culture the definition of success in career has meant pursuing business, medicine or engineering (Traxler, 2009). In this study, the definition of success remained consistent between both the child and the parent, though their ideas of what success look like for the child may differ. Careers outside of business, engineering or medicine can be difficult for the parent to understand or support due to their lack of knowledge or

understanding of the options within those career choices. The pathway to success may not be direct and students may need to pave their own way within their majors or career choices. This makes it challenging for families to understand or support initially. Rani, a senior economics major, described her experience in this way:

Well, I think it was more of a pressure when I was in pre-med preparing for med school. And then when I realized that's it's really not what I wanted to do... after they kind of dealt with what that meant, they became way more supportive of what I wanted to do. It's still kind of hard to understand really what I'm saying all the time, but I think they are more on board with it now.

Rani was able to explain to her parents what she wanted to do, and how she could potentially be successful in her career choice. Similarly, Prashantkumar, a senior political science major, was able to describe the idea of success in a non-traditional major by explaining to his parents the possible modes of success related to his major, such as advanced degrees and other options post-graduation:

They are also very vision focused. You need to know exactly what you want to do. Right now, I'm not sure if I want to go to grad school or if I want to continue with the Governor's office or if I want to work on campaigns or something. They are very like, you have to stick to one thing, they kind of think my mind is all over the place. But in the end, I feel that no matter what career path I choose they would support me in what I'm doing.

In this statement, Prashantkumar describes the way he received support from his parents for his eventual career choice. His parents looked for a direct career pathway and it was difficult for them to understand that there were multiple pathways, with which they were unfamiliar or able to explain to others.

Sonya, a senior accounting major, also described how her career choice was rooted in family history. "I'm one of the first people to go into business among my cousins and everything.

And so my mom's dad was an accountant. But he was charter accounting, but I never [knew] that when I decided to do CPA. So, my mom's side is really excited that someone, one of his grandkids decided to be an accountant." She goes further to describe how that decision was not one that she chose lightly, instead she navigated through numerous options but felt supported in making that decision:

When I was younger I used to want to be a doctor. Then at one point I wanted to be a lawyer. And then I knew I wanted to go into business. So they were always supportive with any of these choices. But they never restrained me. My mom was really excited I chose accounting. And my dad kind of wished I did finance, but he's also okay with me doing accounting. But they never told me that before I chose it.

The participants felt that they had influences, be it a family history of a particular career or the idea of success in certain fields, which impacted how they approached their decision-making. Some of the participants felt that they needed to explain to their families early that they liked or did not like a certain major; others did not recognize the influences of their family until much later in their choice of major. If it was not a traditionally accepted South Asian major, the students had to explain a plan to their families about how that career field would enable them to be considered successful. Often that decision was made through careful conversations and negotiation. There is a continued theme of family impacting or affecting how decisions are made through negotiation and explanations of success.

Astin (1999) talked about the idea of time and how it is a commodity for college students. They have a variety of different obligations be them family or academic work, and time is finite. Their involvement on campus is part of the finite time that student use. Time management and fit are important factors in students making decisions about their involvements. The time they have

is used for areas of involvement where they feel they are gaining the most emotionally and intellectually.

Time management was another factor that affected student decision-making, especially when the organization did not directly benefit them socially or academically. Both Amy and Brian mentioned that time was an issue and they wanted to feel like what they were doing was constructive and not wasting time. Amy had a hard time balancing her commitments in her first year and described how she had to navigate deciding what organizations she was going to stay committed to along with her academic commitments:

The first *a cappella* group that I told you that I joined, that was an Asian one, like a South Asian one where they would kind of fuse Indian and, I guess, American songs. I actually had a bad experience with that, too, in the sense that I joined and I was having some personal issues at that time that had [been] bothering me for a really long time. Meanwhile, I was stressed out about school because I had a class that kind of cut into practice, director's class, and so we had our teaching staff would hold it off for an extra half-hour, and so I would come really late to practice and they didn't like that. The students reiterated that their academics were important as well as their involvements.

As a result, they had to prioritize what organizations they felt were important and to which they felt connected. They navigated the multiple priorities requiring their time and managed involvement in multiple organizations. This often meant choosing one or two groups to which they felt they could devote their time and energy. Those involvements were often the ones with which felt the closest connection and sense of community. Another common theme that emerged when students were asked why they decided not to continue with organizations was that loss of connection or not feeling an initial connection or feeling of being welcomed in the group. Brian describes how he felt joining and leaving a group:

I think it's a lot of the environment. It's where you feel you can contribute to as well as where you feel like it's a safe, comfortable environment. A lot the cultural stuff becomes cliquy and if you know people, a group of friends that you know and then it's like at the

same time the cultural events that I've been to, I didn't feel like the clubs... I was contributing. I was going to meetings and sitting there and go home after and it was kind of a waste of time for me. I feel like the stuff that I've joined, I've stayed because I just feel like I can contribute and it's a comfortable environment.

Fit can be a huge deciding factor for students to sustain their involvement in a particular organization. Brian, Amy and Kim all chose to discontinue their involvement in groups because they did not feel a close fit.

Summary

This research is focused on the ethnic identity of South Asian college students and how it impacts what they get involved with on campus. In this chapter, there were four major themes discussed: ethnic identity, family impact, childhood involvement and focus on academics. These four themes reiterate different elements of the South Asian college student experiences. The study showcases different elements such as the idea of success, academic vigor, and respect for family. All of these factors have an impact on how students select organizations and their sense of community on campus.

In the next chapter, how these elements can impact student affairs practitioners' work with South Asian college students and implications for practice will be explored. The study will also discuss how these themes are similar or different to current models and research related to South Asian college students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS

This study aims to provide research-based information on South Asian college students and their decision-making regarding student involvement. The research finds that South Asian students' decision-making regarding involvement revolves around four basic factors: family influence, ethnic identity, childhood involvement and a focus on academic and career choice.

Involvement is an important part of the college experience for all students. There are prior studies of involvement focused on the broader population of Asian-Americans such as Kwon (2008) and Inkelas (2004). However, this study focused on South Asian students, a group of students not normally studied because of their identification as a model minority. This study sought to give a voice to the experiences of South Asian students, their interactions outside of the classroom, and how these interactions influenced their decision-making regarding student involvements.

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions of the study and the current research literature. In addition, this chapter will draw implications from the research findings that can inform student affairs professionals who work with South Asian students. An overview of the research story will establish a foundation for the discussion of findings and implications.

The Research Story

South Asian students are often categorized as a model minority and subsumed under the term "Asian American." There is little research on this growing group of college students. South Asian students are defined as those whose ethnic origin is from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh,

Bhutan or Tibet (Accapadi, 2012). This study examines the factors that influence how South Asian college students make decisions regarding student involvement. The research questions sought to identify the types of organizations students were involved with, the factors that contributed to their involvement choices and specifically whether ethnic identity was a factor in how they made decisions regarding involvement. Because of the researcher's position as a student affairs professional working with student organizations and leadership programs, as well as her status as a South Asian student affairs professional, the study remained sensitive to the multiple institutional, emotional and cultural roles that interacted with her responsibilities as a researcher. In addition, the researcher's previous work at the institution at which the research was conducted enabled connections with colleagues and individuals at the institution and gave the researcher privilege and power on the campus to conduct the research. The study required careful reflection and bracketing during the interviews and analysis of data. The researcher utilized phenomenological methods to examine the experiences of students in one location, and due to the fact that they were all at the same institution, it describes a narration of "of the 'essence' of an experience" (Creswell, 2013, p. 191).

The location of this study was a diverse Mid-Atlantic state university with a relatively large South Asian student population. It should be noted that even though the university is quite diverse, there are limited categories to record race and ethnicity and none that distinguish between Asian Americans populations. Thus, South Asian students are not separated in university statistical information. The researcher was able to recruit student participants through the involvement office listserv and as well as listservs of different student organizations and snowball sampling. Eighteen students were originally interviewed and two were removed from

the study due to their lack of relevant information to the study. The students were selected through their interest form (see Appendix F) and chosen due to the variety of their involvement, class years, majors and family countries of origin. The students selected were from diverse areas of involvement including academically based groups, fraternities and sororities, sports and culturally-based groups. Data collection was conducted in the spring of 2014 with in-person interviews (see Appendix B for interview protocol). Qualitative interviewing was used with note taking and inductive and deductive coding was used to analyze the data and to obtain a better understanding of students' common experiences.

Discussion

In What Campus Activities Are South Asian Students Involved?

As discussed in Chapter 4, campus activities are influential in student retention and to increase the sense of belonging students experience on college campuses (Astin, 1999). Previous studies show that involvement in student organizations, research activities and out of the classroom experiences increase retention rates and increase leadership skills (Astin, 1999). This was substantiated with the participants in this study. The study found that individuals chose groups based on their sense of belonging and feeling of connection to groups. In addition, the majority of students were involved in some way with an academic-based student group that assisted with their major and career choice which eventually lead to their first jobs or graduate school admissions.

Students were involved with both culturally-based groups and non-culturally-based groups due to a variety of interests and because the groups related to their academic success. They selected organizations that were related to their academic major to assist with networking

and opportunities to make connections with their academic focus and career. This is consistent with Hune and Chan (1997) who found that Asian Americans choose to attend colleges with specific professional goals, rather than to explore fields or areas outside of their major, because success is defined as completing their education and obtaining a job.

Students took part in a large variety of student organizations and campus involvements. For example, they took part in student government, community service activities, honor societies, club sports, religious organizations, musical groups, and social or academically-based fraternities and sororities. The organizations they selected to join were ones for which they felt they had a “fit,” or in which they had prior interest and experience. The students showed interest in activities that gave them academic support and opportunities for interaction with like-minded individuals. Those interests could be related to community service, common musical interests or shared social interests. The “fit” in the organization was the reason students decided to stay with certain groups rather than others even if they were having difficulty with managing time and priorities. Their involvement provided them with support. Ket gave an example of that support:

I guess once I got to know the groups a little better, I would say the people involved really helped. The groups I stayed involved with and continue to kind of want to work with have really liked the people and really like that they emphasize teamwork and cooperation and really unit building... there is a lot of stuff not related to what the actual program is about. That's more related to having people bond that I really appreciate. Just on organizational level, I think that says something when you care about whether or not your members are closer or not. So that's one thing that was really important to me.

Ket was involved because he believed the organization helped him to learn about teamwork, a leadership skill employers seek, and because he felt supported as a member, not just related to the program or event they were running at the time. He continued that sense of belonging and membership when he became part of the leadership of the group. Ket not only

chose this group because it “fit” him but also because he wanted to insure that others who joined also felt that connection.

Students continued involvement in organizations they were a part of prior to college and this engagement impacted their involvement on campus. Much of the involvement related to culturally-based groups stemmed from family involvement in culturally-based organizations while growing up. Students who were involved with culturally-based groups stated that they received support and a sense of community from those who are similar to them. Nagasawa and Wong (1999) explain that there are several social and academic benefits of having a strong ethnic social network; these networks help to integrate minority students into the college social and academic systems, which maximize their chances of survival in college. Betsy described her comfort joining a culturally-based student organization:

It feels very comfortable for me. I grew up with it practically. Everybody, all of my cousins, family, friends, all my family parties, everybody was Indian, so it's just very easy I guess. It's my comfort zone...I was a little bit [nervous], but at the same time, there were enough Indian people that I was still in my comfort zone. I feel I met a lot of friends from that. I'm happy for that. I would also still like to get involved in something that has no Indian people. That would be a really different experience for me.

Betsy was able to articulate that her support network and comfort came from other students who are similar to her on acculturation and ethnic identity scales in the culturally based groups she has joined. She showcased that part of the sense of belonging comes from her experiences of being involved with culturally based groups when she was younger and it allowed her to develop a sense of belonging and comfort with those groups.

Students continued with the organizations that they were involved with, whether they were culturally based or not – such as sports, academic interest groups or community service groups with an interest in finding individuals who shared similar interests.

What Factors Play a Role in South Asian Student's Involvement Choice?

This study found that collective interdependence was a major factor in South Asian students' decision-making about involvement choices. Leong (1995) discusses how interdependence is a critical factor in decision-making related to both purpose and career choice for Asian American college students. She found that Asian American college students were the only ethnic group that actually ranked parental pressure as one of the top factors in career choice. As that is the case with the career choice, it is no surprise that parents and family impact students' involvement choice as well. Students work to honor their own interests as well as managing family interests and expectations.

Astin's (1998) study focused on academic involvement, including studying or focusing on academics, rather than on involvement with academic-based student organizations. However, he finds that there are higher retention rates for students who feel connected to both faculty and peers. Academic based organizations support academic success by providing interaction with like-minded peers and possibly faculty in related fields. In the case of involvement with honor societies, these groups provide evidence of success that many parents or family members expect students to exhibit. Museus (2013) writes about how Asian families value responsibility and the obligation to pay family back for the sacrifices they made for the students' education. Students and the parents alike see the invitation to join and participation in honor societies as a prestigious event; one that they can tangibly describe to others as a representation of the student's success. The students in the study talked about how their parents were excited about their participation in and provided financial support for them to join the honor societies. Sameeha reiterated this when she described her parents' reactions to her joining an honor society:

As far as the Honors Societies, yeah, because being a Pakistani as everyone says, it always was about getting to the next step; achieving being in those honors societies. Those, yes, I would definitely say when the letter would come home, I would show my mom and the first thing she say, yeah, join it, it doesn't matter how much money it is. It's going to be something good on your résumé, or transcript, then go for it.

In addition to “fit,” collective interdependence with the family also has an impact on students' choice of involvement. Collective interdependence is common within Asian cultures where decisions are made through family conversations based on the needs of the family rather than the needs of individuals (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Segal, 1991). Students spoke about how their current involvement was influenced by earlier family involvements. Some students were involved in organizations or areas of interest in which their parents had participated, like Amy whose grandmother and mother impacted her involvement with music:

I'm in an all-girls *a cappella* group and that, I basically just joined because music has always been a part of my life. My grandma was a really good singer. She never had like formal lessons, but she used to sing classical Carnatic music. My mom always, like, I guess, really encouraged my sister and I to get involved in music, and I sang Carnatic for a few years, maybe like for about six or seven years.

This influence of previous involvement was especially true of those involved with culturally based groups prior to college. Selina described her experience with a cultural group while she was growing up and how her parents impacted her desire to get involved with culturally based organizations:

There was always this kind of huge Bengali community in [my hometown]. And that was since I was little. I think that's what definitely drew me toward all this cultural stuff all these shows. Because basically they [hosted] big functions where all these people get together when they share in the culture. There is food, it's like a fair. They rent a stage and they have dance performances, singing performances, plays, things like that. They were all really elaborate and my parents... oh, one thing I definitely need to tell you. My dad, he's is super cultural.

She went on to describe how she wanted to duplicate that experience for herself and how that spurred her and her brothers to continued involvement in the community. Parents were consulted about decisions about their students' involvement and education. The study showed students navigated their parent's expectations as well as their own, though they often explained to their parents what their interests were and how they related to their schooling to gain understanding and affirmation of their decisions. Amy described her parents' focus on education:

The emphasis of education that parents always put on me, and I know there's like a stereotype that all Asians are good at school. It's not like that obviously, but at least my family really enforced the importance of education. As a result, I always had an interest towards things that are education-based.

The idea of collective interdependence is evident in the way students talked with their families before making decisions. Collective interdependence both affirmed choice and generated responsibility. Students discussed feeling obligated to show symbols of success to their family in order to confirm that their parents' sacrifices of time and effort had been fruitful.

In What Ways Does Ethnic Identity Influence Involvement?

Ethnic identity influences how students make decisions about involvement as shown through the two models by Accapadi (2012) and Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002). Students chose organizations based on their collective interdependence, their focus on academics and their prior interest in the organization.

According to Accapadi's (2012) model of APIDA Asian American Identity Consciousness model (shown in Appendix G), there are a variety of factors that influence the construct of the identity for these students. South Asian students experienced a large family influence and ethnic attachment due to their involvement with more culturally-based organizations when they were younger. These experiences might shape how they define their

involvement. Childhood family influence and prior involvement have an impact on students' choice on involvement later in the college years. Based on this model and the data from this study, I conclude that when the students attend culturally based programs with their families during childhood, they obtain a sense of community and a sense of belonging with the groups offering the programs. One example of this was Selina:

My dad was the president of that committee for a year. It was like a big deal. So me and my friends we just grew up watching people on stage dancing all these older people just dancing on stage. We want to do that. So we did. When we were like seven years old we did our first dance on stage.

Selina and her family participated in culturally based organizations while she was growing up and her father was very active in leadership roles within the community. Selina talked about getting involved with the group as a young child and wanting to replicate her parents' involvement. Her family found their sense of community within this group and when Selina came to college she looked for individuals that were like her and had a similar sense of community. She found that with a culturally based *a cappella* group. When her older brother went to college, he also became involved with a similar culturally-based group. Thus, although family did not have a direct result in selection of the group, her family's previous involvement with culturally based groups influenced her decision to find similar groups.

Another factor that influences involvement is what Accapadi (2012) defined as ethnic attachment, the idea of feeling connected to the culture based on ethnic markers, which include but are not limited to cultural norms, religiosity and language. If individuals are introduced to these ideas of ethnic attachment through their involvement in groups rather than strictly through their family, they may seek opportunities to expand or continue those involvements when they come to college. Community and sense of belonging may come from prior involvement in the

organizations that gave students that sense of belonging and may continue when they come to college.

Students who did not participate in culturally-based activities when they were growing up may navigate their identities differently. Amy talked about being introduced to Indian music and participating in these activities while growing up. She participated in a culturally based musical group when she first came to college, but then due to time constraints and differing schedules chose to leave the group and participate in other interests that allowed her time to keep her focus on academics and other organizations with which she wanted to be involved. Her decision not to continue with the cultural based group was partially due to her focus on another part of her cultural identity – her focus on her education. Her story of prior involvement was due to the ethnic marker of music, but her family did not seem active within the wider cultural community so it was more of an individual interest than being part of a larger community group that conducted these types of programs. Raj and Selina's families were actively involved with community groups as they were growing up, and so they were able to manage to continue those involvements in the future.

South Asians have a strong sense of education as the means to move up in the community. There is a sense of obligation students talked about in paying back their parents for the sacrifices they made, and familial influence is a large part of that identity. Both Accapadi (2012) and Museus (2013) stress that parents and extended family have a strong influence. APIDA students receive messages about their identity through these familial influences and those messages strongly influence their ethnic identity.

One of the elements raised in the interviews was the internalized racism in the South Asian community. Students spoke about feeling “othered” or ignored by students who were involved with culturally based student groups and by those who were not involved in culturally based groups. Each group felt judgment by the other about how they showcased their culture. The students who participated in ethnic oriented activities felt that students who did not engage with culturally based groups had less knowledge about their culture, while students who were not involved in culturally based groups stated that they felt close to their culture but did not need to participate in the organizations to showcase their cultural influences. This is reflected in a quote from Ket who described his relationship with individuals who are from culturally based groups:

I mean like all them I haven’t looked into it really, really closely, or even made an effort to go speak with them [students who are in leadership of culturally based groups] necessarily, but even just from the involvement fairs or looking at the kind of events that they put on, on campus. I get the impression its kind of South Asian events for South Asian’s and of course, everyone is welcome to come. But there is this element of exclusion or element of this is for South Asian people. And you need to really understand how our particular cultural values and things like this really participate and get something out of it. And I guess to me, the South Asian identity is a lot looser of a thing.

Ket’s is an example of the students who spoke about identifying with their South Asian culture but not feeling drawn to South Asian organizations due to feeling not “South Asian” enough to join. His family did not participate in the culturally based groups that some of the students who are involved with the culturally based organizations did when they were younger, so he had no experience with them prior to college.

Implications

How can student affairs professionals and higher education leaders change practices to encourage more involvement and engagement of South Asian students?

Using the information gained through this research, there are a number of implications for student affairs professionals to utilize in their work with South Asian college students.

Academic Focus

South Asian college students are centrally focused on their academic experience. As student affairs professionals, we must be mindful of that focus and how that impacts students' experiences both in and out of the classroom. In order to attract students to organizations that are non-academically focused, it is important to emphasize what students may gain from the experience of participating in the groups. How can we make the experience valuable to the student so they may be able to explain how it impacts them not only socially but potentially professionally in the future? The idea of credentialing could be valuable in explaining the positive impact a group can have socially and in a student's professional future. South Asian students seek ways to demonstrate success to their families. If they are able to explain their involvement, their decisions about involvement and show the quality and consequences of their involvement, their choices will have more credibility with their families. Honor societies are perfect examples of this type of credentialing. Being invited to participate in an honor society represents success in that particular field and students showcase to their parents and others their success. An honor society is a form of credentialing in that its very purpose is recognizing success in a given field. Internships also demonstrate to families that the students are working towards success by getting practical experiences that will help them achieve financial stability and a possible place of employment. Families can share this kind of involvement as evidence of student success. Other examples of academic involvement include leadership programs and other experiences that are directly related to the enhancement of academic credentials.

If students are able to talk about their involvement experiences helping their academics or future career goals, they are better able to defend to their families spending time outside of their academics. Most of the participants in this study, were involved in some academic-based organizations, this may not always provide the social support and sense of belonging that students might be interested in and they may seek other outlets.

Navigating Family

As a South Asian student affairs professional, one of the main questions one receives from South Asian students is how one defends his or her career choice outside of the STEM fields or business to his or her parents. One way to change conversations about academic choice especially with South Asian families is to reframe the idea of success. Students often talked about wanting to give back to their families and felt they were doing that by choosing majors or organizations their families hold in high esteem. Yet students such as Ket and Prashantkumar, who explained to their parents what they hoped to do with their majors and how the organizations with which they were involved provided them with networking and support, believed their parents were more amenable to understanding their major choices. The students explained and demonstrated to their parents that they had plans or had identified success measures, in order for their families to understand their opportunities for long term post-graduate success. For example, Ket chose to pursue a Ph.D. program at an Ivy League school that would offer him many career opportunities, and Prashantkumar received a government position that enabled security and success. By explaining to their families that they had plans and ideas of success, they navigated those experiences with their families. Learning from these experiences, advisors can assist students in gaining resources that might assist the student in identifying those

avenues for success. Student affairs engagement and involvement professionals need to work with campus career centers and academic affairs professionals to help students build connections between the work they are doing outside of the classroom and how that work impacts their future career trajectory. Together the professionals can assist students in creating action plans, help them redefine success for themselves and their parents and counsel students on how to explain these to their parents.

Also, students should showcase their involvement to their families. Employers seek multiple skills that students gain through their involvements including conflict resolution and budget management. By creating partnerships between the career center and engagement, student affairs professionals can assist students in articulating these skills and their importance to their parents as well as their future employers. In addition to assisting the students in gaining affirmation from their families, this also assists students in obtaining internships and other valuable work experience that they can then showcase to their parents as a valid and credentialed experience.

Families are a major influence for South Asian college students and they play an important role in the students' college experience. It is an important part of the identity of the student as shown in Accapadi's (2012) APIDA Identity Consciousness model (Appendix G). In this study family was shown to have an important role in students' experiences outside of the classroom. For South Asian students, families provide significant support systems and a context for shared decision-making. Student affairs professionals must be aware and accepting of this collective interdependence. The relationship of South Asian students to their families can be challenging issues to navigate and are issues not entirely in the student affairs practitioner role.

Practitioners should never dismiss family impact, but should assist students in identifying the resources and skills needed to navigate the difficult conversations of explaining their involvement to their families. Credentialing and reframing the idea of success are ways in which student affairs professionals can provide resources to students for navigating these muddled waters. Students may present themselves with their family to advising meetings. It is important that student affairs professionals acknowledge their presence and the role they play but also provide support to the student as they personally navigate these experiences. Student affairs professionals also must note that the students serve as cultural translators to their families. The professionals must assist the students making those translations.

Cultural Competency Training

In order to assist with cultural translation, we need to provide cultural competency training for professionals. Under the model minority myth the assumption about South Asian students is that they do not need the attention or focus other students of color require. The students interviewed for this study provide evidence that their stories and needs differ, depending on religion, country of origin and socioeconomic status. Educating individuals about the different types of South Asian students at an institution, the themes of collective interdependence and information such as Accapadi's (2012) APIDA Identity Consciousness model which showcases the different aspects and influences on ethnic identity is imperative for successfully working with this diverse population. Though this is still an area of higher education and student affairs that warrants further study, training student affairs professionals about these models and providing them with cultural competency training about this population, will enable them to reach South Asian students more effectively.

The students interviewed in this study had experiences from both academic and non-academic involvement. Students selected their activities for a number of reasons, including prior interest, searching for like-minded people, providing support or acknowledgement of their academics, networking and professional opportunities, and as an outlet for identified talents and enjoyment. Involvements are important because they provide support to students and connect them to the campus community in new and powerful ways. This connection assists in students' retention and interest in the campus community. Involvements may or may not come in the form of culturally based groups but whether or not a student engages in culturally based involvement does not mean that the students' cultural or ethnic identity is not relevant to or an important element of who they are. Students may showcase their identities in the different ways they approach their experiences. Cultural competency training that focuses on the reasons South Asian students pursue involvement in both culturally-based and non-culturally-based groups is needed to educate individuals about this type of ethnic identity development.

Specific work needs to be done for the students who fall into the marginalized aspect of acculturation. These students may not see themselves as needing to seek assistance and support through the cultural organizations or cultural centers but may struggle to find their sense of belonging on campus. Their paths are not straightforward. Student affairs professionals will need to take time to really listen to our students and their stories. The work of identity formation and negotiating meaning is messy. Additional training is needed to give professionals the skills required to assist South Asian students in negotiating this type of identity development and navigation.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Study

This study was conducted at one diverse institution in the Northeast with 20 students. The sample of students had diverse involvements on campus, although there were more students who were not involved in culturally-based groups and the majority of students were juniors and seniors at the time of the study. The study included participants from various countries of origin, but the majority had parents who were born in India. The study relied on one interview per participant. Further studies would benefit from the use of focus groups. The conversations among students about their shared and different experiences could provide new data as they build on each other's experiences. The majority of students interviewed self-identified as middle class or upper middle class. As second-generation immigrants whose families had immigrated to the United States largely due to their parent's strong educational background, only two students talked about economic issues that their families were facing. The lack of difference in socioeconomic status may have impacted the study and should be considered in further studies.

South Asian students are a growing population on college campuses. This study is one of the few dedicated to South Asian college students. Further research is needed on the different populations by countries of origin of South Asian college students. They should not just be incorporated into the diaspora of Asian American college students. Although they have similarities, their identities and their cultural influences are unique and they have different social dynamics than their East Asian counterparts. There is recent literature about the mental health of South Asian college students and the resiliency of this generation of college students (Elias, 2015). South Asian students are less likely to seek assistance for mental health issues and this is especially true of those who are immigrants. Further studies are needed on the mental health concerns and the ideas of resiliency amongst the South Asian student population and how student

involvement may assist in the providing support and connections to the campus community that tend to improve overall health and wellness.

One area needing further study is the difference between students who participate in culturally-based organizations and those who did not participate in culturally-based groups. The students often spoke of participants or non-participants in a way that they felt “othered.” The internal racism within the groups requires examination. Pyke and Dang (2003) explore this phenomenon within the broader Asian community and further research is needed to understand how this translates into the experience of students who identify as South Asian.

Another under-researched area is childhood involvement. Students with families that were involved in South Asian organizations when they were younger were more likely to continue that involvement in college. What implications does this have for ethnic identity? How does this behavior compare with non-South Asian students? Additionally, does this pattern hold for South Asian students who do not have large South Asian communities on campus? How does a lack of childhood community support impact South Asian students’ involvements in college? Do they still choose South Asian organizations when they come to college if they did not have that sense of community growing up? Ket brings that point up in his interview:

It is very confusing to navigate and me personally I felt like not wanting to deal with any of that, because I feel we didn’t really go to Temple growing up, we didn’t really participate in an Indian community here and mostly because there wasn’t one that existed as I was growing up. But I feel like I can’t enjoy my South Asian heritage as much given that the sort of interests are very, very specific to either the culture, the religion or were South Asians going into pre-medicine sort of thing. There is nothing really there; it doesn’t have to be an organization, really. But there is no kind of infrastructure there for dealing with people at the margins almost who don’t fit in all those stereotypes.

Another area of interest is the impact of academically-based student organizations on South Asian involvement. In my research of student organization literature, there is little

available on academically-oriented student organizations such as major-based organizations, honor societies or pre-professional organizations. Some areas for exploration include the support they give students, the types of students selected to participate in these groups and how we could provide these organizations with additional advising and support.

The study focused on students who were already involved with student organizations. Though the researcher recruited students who had a variety of involvements, it did not include students who were not involved in any organizations. The students selected were involved in at least one or two different groups and in many cases had been involved with groups for a significant period of time. Another area for further exploration is the inclusion of students who were not involved in any organizations. Why did they select not to get involved? How does this lack of involvement impact their ethnic identities? And, what strategies might be used to increase their involvement?

One last area of research and limitation is the idea of the South Asian college student experience and the close relationship to their families. The students in this study were all of the millennial generation. With the study of millennial students, there is a generational trend of consulting family for decisions and having close relationships with parents. The stereotype is that these students are constantly engaging either via phone calls or text to their parents and that their parents are involved with a large aspect of their college experience. With the study of South Asian millennial college students, it is hard to discern whether their connection with their family is a result of collective interdependence or a result of their belonging to the millennial generation. It would be hard to ascertain whether the identity development comes from cultural influences or generational guidelines, but it is important to note that the trend amongst this

generation of students is to engage with their families and to have close relationships with them. Further studies may want to examine if the South Asian students' engagement with parents is more than other students and does the cultural collective interdependence play a role in the way South Asian students engage with their families. When studying this it is important to keep in the mind not just the cultural implications but also the generational roles.

Conclusion

This study stemmed from my work as a student affairs professional, as an advisor to student organizations and as a South Asian college graduate. Working at a large research institution with a growing South Asian student population, I saw students choosing to get involved with a number of different types of organizations, just as I did years ago. The students navigated the bustling involvement fair on sunny days on an expansive green lawn with students milling around trying to recruit new members for their organizations. Working the fair, I would see students who would line up asking questions, looking for particular groups to chat with them and join their organizations, and other students just wandered looking for groups of individuals that looked like them, had interests similar to them or with which they felt comfortable. Bright-eyed and sometimes overwhelmed, the students navigated through the fair and signed many sheets with their emails to see where they could find their niche. Why did students choose the groups they chose? What made them stay? I initially thought for South Asian students that it was all a matter of acculturation.

My personal experience was that I became involved with non-culturally-based student organizations and most of my friends and community in college came from organizations that were not culturally based. I had no interest in joining culturally-based groups but my parents felt

that it was an important part of my development to join these groups. I politely declined and continued with groups that were not culturally based. I made South Asian and diverse cultural friends through an academically-based group. Now as a student group advisor, I watch the dynamic of students navigating student organization choices with culturally based groups and non-culturally-based groups and seek to decipher why they choose the groups they choose. I wanted to learn more about this navigation out of a need for personal knowledge as well as to inform the practice of other student affairs professionals working with South Asian college students.

In conducting this study, I see why students selected the organizations they did at a large state university in the Northeast. The four major themes of this study were family influence, ethnic identity, past childhood involvement and career oriented/academic organizations as the driving force of South Asian student involvement. These are interesting elements of the identity of South Asian college student experience and as we look at our growing diverse populations of students, we need to take into account the variety of influences our student experience in the growing global world. Not all students are the same and we need to listen to their stories and not make assumptions about where they come from in order to assist them. There is a myriad of influences that shape our students and if we are able to listen to those stories we will be more equipped to help and guide them through their college experience.

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Appendix A: Student Bios

Amy

A 21-year-old female, Amy and I met in the student center for her interview. Graduating soon and having already secured a job with a major accounting firm, Amy was enthusiastic about moving to a new city and starting her career. She was a Supply Chain management major from immigrant parents from India. Her involvement included being a research assistant, involvement in academic conference for high school students, an *a cappella* group, and teaching a first year course. She had prior involvements in student government and a south Asian based music group. Amy is the younger of two sisters and self identifies as Indian.

Becky

Becky was a sophomore, 19-year-old, cell biology and neuroscience major. She moved off campus to a nearby house after living on campus one year. Her religion is Catholic and her family is Malyali, which is a sub-section of the Indian community. She is active within her church outside of the campus and is also involved on-campus with a South Asian dance troupe and a co-ed community service fraternity. She self identifies as being Malyali or Indian depending on who she talks with. She explored the different religious organizations on campus but chose to stick to her home church due to the closeness of the community and not feeling like she fit into the other groups

Brian

A 4th year student, Brian was a math major with a minor in computer science. Due to his changing majors from biology and engineering he would be attending college for one more year. He works on campus as a brand ambassador for a software company, held an executive board

position for a programming board and was a member of a social fraternity. He lived on campus his first years and then moved off campus near the university. Brian grew up with both of his parents and has two sisters who are both older than him. He self identifies as being Indian

Delilah

A third year nutritional science major, Delilah is the daughter of immigrant parents from Bangladesh. She is the youngest of four children and has one brother and three sisters. Delilah's parents were separated and her father lived in Bangladesh. Although she stated that she was not very religious, she identified as a practicing Muslim. She was involved with a social baking group, a nutritional advocates program, and a community service group. Her involvements were based on her major in Nutrition and she hoped to be a dietician. Delilah is active within the Bengali community at home but had not chosen to get involved on campus due to time. She self identifies as being Bengali.

Emelia

Emelia is a sophomore, psychology major and exudes bubbline. With a smile on her face and positive outlook she was one of the interviews that went very quickly and her enthusiasm was contagious. The oldest of two children, she has a younger brother and she described her family as a close-knit. including their dog. Emelia is involved with planning a student leadership conference, residence hall association, and planning of a large service project. She grew up in New Jersey in a fairly diverse area and her parents were both born in India. She self identifies as being a feminist and as Indian American.

Ket

Ket was a 21-year-old male senior political science major with immigrant parents from India. He was involved with putting on an academic conference for high school students, participated in a prestigious fellowship program, the 'secret' senior honor society for the institution which recognizes a small number of students for their academic and involvement on campus and conducts research with a faculty member. He also peer taught a first year class. At the time of the interviews Ket was applying to PhD programs in Political Science. Ket lived at home with his mother and brother at the time of the interview. His father passed away a few years ago and he enjoys spending time with his younger brother who was in high school at the time and his Mom.

Kim

A 19-year-old sophomore, Kim was a finance major but was still exploring her options of majors at the time of the interview. She was interested in possibly going into psychology. Kim grew up in a nuclear home with immigrant parents from South India and one older brother. Her father was a professor at the University and her mother also worked in education. Kim was involved with a business mentoring program for high school students, club soccer and a social sorority. Soccer was a large part of her high school career and she originally was going to attend a college where she would play soccer. She was involved with a culturally based organization growing up in her community at home and continues to be involved with that group when she returns home. She self identifies as being Indian.

Natalie

Natalie was a senior public health major and hopes to continue to be a nutrition student. She was applying to graduate schools at the time of the interview hoping to obtain a master's

degree in Environmental and occupational health. Natalie lived on campus for the first two years and moved home the last two years. She stated that living on campus helped her to adjust to campus life and allowed her to get involved with organizations. Her parents emigrated from India and she has one older brother. Natalie started her involvement in community service when she was high school and continued with that in college, with her involvement in community service activities at the University level. She is also involved in the honor society related to her major. She self identifies herself as Indian.

Prashantkumar

A male student who is actively involved with the organization that puts on academic conference for high school students; Prashantkumar was one of the first students interviewed. He grew up in a town that had a large South Asian community. Prashantkumar loves music, he was very involved in band in high school and participated in Marching Band his first semester of college. He then became involved with Model United Nations and to explore religion in his junior year. He now identifies himself as a Christian, but grew up in a very conservative Hindu household -- religion is something he does not talk with his family about. Prashantkumar was an intern for a government office, which aligns with his Political Science and Economics major. He self identifies as Indian-American.

Raj

Raj is a sophomore, with double majors in supply chain and information technology. He is involved with a social fraternity that is culturally based and in a culturally based student organization. Raj commuted from home his first semester of college and then moved near campus his second semester, while going through the new member process for his fraternity. Raj

grew up in a predominately white town and the majority of his friends growing up were the fellow Indian students in his class. He expressed struggling to fit into college until he found his fraternity and student organizations. Raj is also involved with the Supply Chain Association on-campus and his hobbies include skiing. He wants to learn to fly a small airplane. He self identifies as being Desi and Indian.

Reena

Reena was a 21-year-old senior majoring in Biotechnology who is involved with community service organizations and an organization related to her a major. She was the daughter of immigrant parents from India and has one younger brother. Her parents both work in the financial industry. She was applying to graduate schools in science and business. She self identifies as being Indian.

Sahil

Sahil was a first year student who at the age of 18 has been significantly active within the public health community. He was a Cell Biology and Neuroscience Major who identified as pre-med. He participated in a pre-medical student organization and served a peer health advocate. Sahil is the oldest of three children of immigrant parents from India. Since high school, he has been involved with educating others about sexual health issues. He self identifies as being Indian or Punjabi. Punjab is a region in India and individuals who live in that area identify as Punjabi.

Sameeha

A senior psychology and criminal justice major, Sameeha lived at home. Her father was born in the Punjab region of Pakistan and her Mother was also born in Pakistan. She is the

middle child with an older sister and younger brother and they have a close relationship. At the time of the interview she was applying for master's programs in Forensic Psychology. Sameeha identifies as Muslim but is not involved with student organizations related to her religion though she utilizes prayer rooms available around campus and attends occasional meetings. She is actively involved with a leadership honor society, a community service group, and an honor society related to her major. She identifies herself as Pakistani-American.

Shanti

At age 21, Shanti was senior majoring in supply chain management. She self identifies as being bi-racial as her father was born in India and her mother was born in the United States; they are now divorced. Shanti has one brother who is two years older. She followed her brother's footsteps in high school by becoming a wrestler. She was a founding member of a business fraternity and taught a first year course. She was also part of peer mentor group for the business school.

Selina

A sophomore transfer student who was an Exercise Science major, Selina was an active member of a number of organizations on campus. She participated in a culturally based music group, cultural based organization, and a community service group. A bundle of energy, Selina described her close-knit family of her parents and two older brothers. Selina was very active with her family in a cultural group growing up and continued with a similar organization when she attended University. She self identifies as Bangladeshi-American.

Sonya

Sonya was a senior major in accounting. She was an only child born to immigrant parents from India. Sonya just received a formal job offer for an accounting firm and was extremely proud of the fact that she was continuing her grandfather's legacy as an accountant. She was involved with a culturally based group when she was growing up and has continued to be involved with it outside of campus. Her main involvement on campus was a business fraternity. She self identifies as Indian or Hindu

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

- 1) Tell me a little about yourself.
 - a) What is your name? What year are you? Major?
 - b) Do you live on campus? Off? If off campus, do you live with your family? Are you a commuter?
- 2) Describe your family. Can you describe your relationship with your family?
 - a) Do you act differently when you are home vs. at school? Can you describe those interactions?
- 3) What activities were you involved during your time in high school?
- 4) Describe your involvement in college.
 - a) What are some of the things that you are involved with? Do you work on campus? What ways do you spend time on campus other than in classroom?
 - b) How many hours do you think you spend in a typical week with your organization or activity? Is there one that you spend more time with?
 - c) Describe your interactions/role within the group or activity or work
 - d) Are you involved with activities that are culturally based that are not at school?
- 5) Describe how you choose/ decision-making process in getting involved? What made you decide to get involved with these activities?
 - a) What characteristics of the organization drew you to the organization?
 - b) Are there other activities that you were involved with or interested in before? What made you choose to stay with these particular activities?

- 6) Is the organization ethnically or religiously based? If so, please describe the mission of the group?
- 7) How would you define yourself if someone were to ask what you are? How would you define yourself ethnically?
- 8) Can you describe the evolution of your identity?
 - a) Describe your ethnicity
 - b) What terms have you used in the past to describe your ethnicity?
 - c) Describe the situations/events that made you change or use that particular term?
- 9) How has your ethnicity played a part your involvement?
- 10) What is the ethnic makeup of your friends?
- 11) Is there anything else that you would like to add that I might not have covered?

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer and Email

Are you a 2nd generation South Asian College Student between the ages of 18-24*?

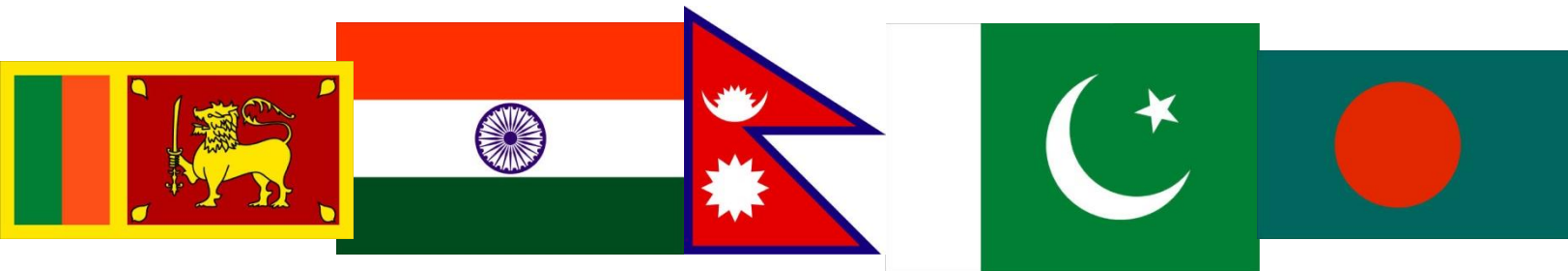
*** You were born in the United States and one or more of your parents were born in either India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, or Bangladesh**

AND

Are you involved on campus?

Come and participate in an interview that will explore your involvement.

Contact Avani at avani.rana@gse.rutgers.edu with any questions and to participate in the interview.



Attachment 3b: Email advertisement to be sent to listservs

Are you 2nd generation South Asian college student between the ages of 18-24? (2nd generation is defined as an individual born in the United States who has one or more parent who was born in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, or Bangladesh). Are you also involved? Come and participate in an interview which will examine South Asian students' involvement. If you are interested in participating in the study or have any questions, please contact Avani Rana at avani.rana@gse.rutgers.edu .

Appendix D: Consent form

Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Acculturation and Student Involvement of South Asian college students

You are invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, you should know enough about it to make an informed decision. If you have any questions, ask the investigator. You should be satisfied with the answers before you agree to be in the study. You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Avani Rana, a graduate student in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. Researchers are required to provide potential research participants with a consent form to completely inform participants about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to discuss risks and benefits of participation, and to empower participants to make informed decisions. Please feel free to ask questions.

The purpose of this study is to examine how South Asian college students decide what to be involved on campus. The study will explore whether acculturation has a factor in what students are involved with. South Asian college students are an emerging population on college campuses and there is very little research on this population. This research project will examine how acculturation, which is how Americanized or how “Desi” someone might be. Desi is a term that is referred to someone who is from the South Asian community. The research seeks to build more information about South Asian college student, acculturation and the decision making process behind student involvement. Previous studies have focused on the impact of involvement on college students but very few have focused on minority students. Moreover, the studies have focused on the Asian American population in general, and have not been focused on the South Asian population. The South Asian population is unique in many ways and there is very little research on this population of college students. This study would assist student affairs professionals in understanding this population of students more, and also assist in learning more about to engage them, and provide a framework for programing.

Some issues under investigation include:

- How do South Asian students decide on what they are involved with?
- What are the factors that effect decision making?
- Is acculturation a factor in the decision making process for their student involvement?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Without penalty, you may choose not to participate at all or may agree to participate in certain procedures. You are free to not answer certain questions or to discontinue your participation at anytime. Your participation poses no known risks to you and possible benefits including an opportunity to reflect on your South Asian identity and involvement on campus. There will be approximately ten to twelve students interviewed for this study.

You will not receive compensation for participating in the study. Participation in this study will involve participating in an in person interview for approximately an hour and a possible follow up interview in the months following. The interview will be conducted based your schedule. The only alternative to the in person interview might be a Skype or a phone interview which would also be recorded.

The questions included in the interview protocol are related to your ethnic identity development and may produce strong emotions or emotional risks. Some potential risks include embarrassment or discomfort when answering questions or emotional distress. You can obtain assistance for Counseling services at 732-932-7884 at Rutgers University.

Although the data gathered may not assist you directly. Information gathered from this study will benefit college students and administrators in the future as the data will inform their decision making about programming and counseling of South Asian students. I will share the final research project when it is completed.

Page 1, Participant's Initials_____

CONFIDENTIALITY

Data from this research will be kept confidential. Information you divulge will be confidential, neither your name or contact information will be revealed to any individual outside of the research project. I will keep this information confidential by using a pseudonym and keeping the data securely in a locked file cabinet and password protected computer. The identity of the study participants cannot be revealed.

COMPENSATION

For participating in this study you will receive no compensation.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the research or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Avani Rana, at Graduate School of Education, via phone at (848) 932-7617 or via email avani.rana@gse.rutgers.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848 932 4058
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate at any time without penalty to you. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be removed from the data set and destroyed.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Study Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Study Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

With your permission, your interview will be audio recorded, which allows for the interviewer to listen carefully and keep accurate records. The audio files are kept confidential and will be destroyed after transcription. Sign below if you agree to have the interview audio recorded.

Study Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Coding Tree

- Campus activities
 - ethnically oriented
 - academically oriented
 - performing arts
 - greek life
 - cultural
 - social
 - community service
 - sports/athletic
- shaming
- hardwork
- friendship -sense of community
- Choice of activities reasoning
 - involved in high school
 - sense of community
 - leadership
 - new organization
 - ethnically oriented continuation
 - academically related
- Family influence
 - positive family influence
 - negative family influence
- Childhood involvement
 - cultural groups
- model minority
- idea of perfection
- reasons for leaving organization
 - not feeling connected
 - lack of time
 - lack of respect for the group
- Parental expectations
 - decision making based on parental influence
 - sharing of all information
 - respect of parents
 - sharing of limited information
 - model child
- academic vigor
- Ethnic identity
 - ID as hyphenated
 - ID as American
 - ID as South Asian
 - identification as Indian

emphasis on education

idea of not fitting the "norm"

Level of Involvement

low level	Description member in an organization or two
high level	Description
middle level	Description leadership position in an organization but member in others

Appendix F: Intake Survey

Involvement of South Asian Students

Introduction

Thank you for taking to complete this questionnaire. Your answers are important in helping me determine if you will participate in my dissertation study.

This questionnaire should only take 5 minutes of your time and your answers will be kept confidential. By filling out this questionnaire you can be entered in a drawing for a \$50 Barnes and Noble gift card.

If you have any questions of the survey please contact Avani Rana at avani.rana@gse.rutgers.edu or (732) 474-7982

Consent form

Project Title : Ethnic Identity and Student Involvement of South Asian college students

Purpose of the study: This research is being conducted by Avani Rana, a doctoral candidate in the department of Educational Theory Policy and Administration in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are South Asian student who is involved on campus. The purpose of this study is to examine the ethnic identity and involvement of South Asian students at Rutgers University under the guidance of Dr. James Giarelli

Potential risks and discomfort: There are no known risks associated with participating in this research study

Potential benefits: There is no direct benefit to you, but I hope that in the future other people might benefit from the study through improved understanding of South Asian college student and their involvement

Confidentiality: Data gathered, as part of the study will be treated with strict confidence.

Information you divulge will be kept confidential and your name will not be revealed to any individual or group outside the research project. Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in password protected computer and database. Any hard copy records will be stored in in a locked storage cabinet that only the researcher will have access to. Your privacy will be protect to the maximum extent allowable by law. The data collected will be retained

for three years following the closing of the protocol. Further all information collected on the participants not selected for the study will be destroyed.

Right to withdrawal and questions: Your participation in this research project is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have any question, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report any injury related to the research, please contact the investigator, Avani Rana at avani.rana@gse.rutgers.edu or (732) 474-7982.

Participant rights: If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research related injury, please contact: Rutgers University, Institutional Review Board for the protection of Human Subjects Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 3 Rutgers Plaza New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559; phone 848-932-4058 email humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

* 1. Statement of Consent: Your participation indicated that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your question have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in their research study. You may print a copy of this form using your /browser's print option.

If you agree to participate, please click "I Agree/Consent" below.

☒ I agree/Consent

☐ I don't
agree

Involvement of South Asian Students

2. Demographic information

2. First Name

3. Last Name

4. Current Age

5. Current Class Year at Rutgers University

☐ First

☐ Year

☐ Sophom

☐ ore

☐ Junior

Senior

Senior (5th year)

Senior (6th year)

6. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

7. How do you identify your gender (i.e. man, woman, male, female, gender queer, etc)

8. In what country were you born in?

9. In what country was your Father born in?

10. In what country was your Mother born in?

11. What year did you first enroll at Rutgers University?

12. School/College of Enrollment at Rutgers University

13. Major/Academic Area of Interest

14. Involvement on campus (i.e. Scarlet Ambassador, student organizations, Research, RA, student worker, etc)

Involvement of South Asian Students

3. Dissertation study

15. Are you interested in being interviewed for my dissertation study focusing on students' ethnic identity development and involvement of South Asian students?

If you are selected for an interview, you would need to agree to participate in one individual interview that will last approximately an hour to hour and half. This interview will take place in the Spring 2014 semester. I will ask questions during the interview that are centered around your ethnic identity and your involvement. All interviews will be conducted during a time and location convenient for you. Following the interview, as a token of appreciation you will receive a \$20 Target gift card.

☐ Yes I am interested in being interviewed

☐ No I am not interested in being interviewed

Comments (optional)

Involvement of South Asian Students

4. Interest in interview for study

If you are interested in being interviewed for my study. Please provide the following contact information

16. Preferred email address

17. Cell Phone Number

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please enter your contact information below if you would like to be entered in a drawing to win a gift card worth \$20.00 from Barnes and Noble. If you do not want to be entered in the drawing, click the (Done) button.

18. Preferred email address

19. Cell Phone Number

Appendix G: Accapadi Asian American Identity Consciousness Model

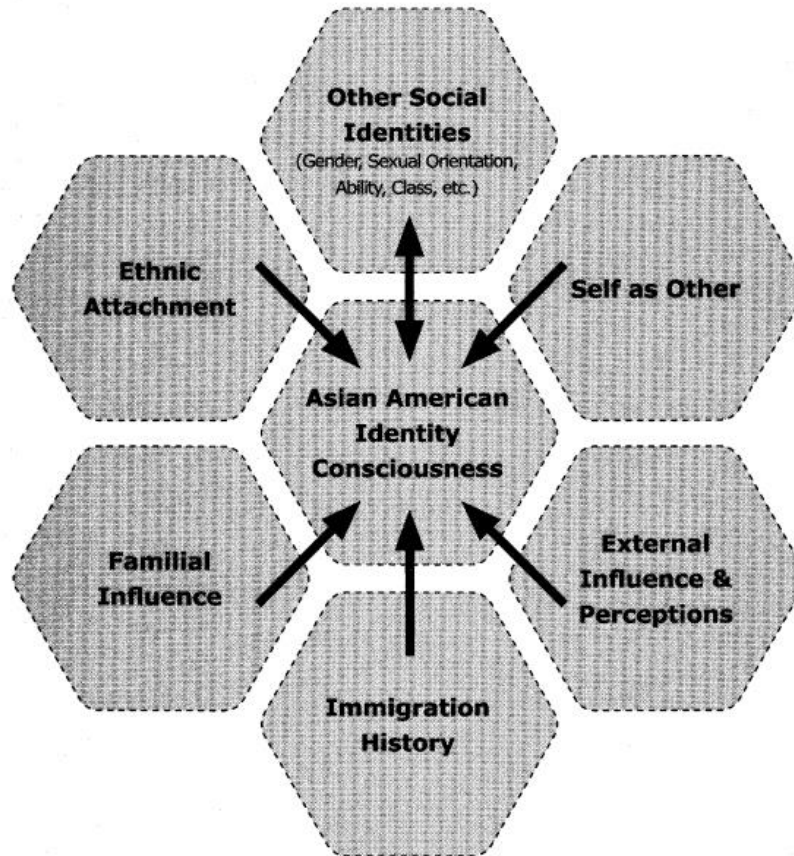


Figure 1. Asian American Identity Consciousness Model. Adapted from “Asian American Identity Consciousness” by M. M. Accapadi, 2012, in D. Ching, & A. Agbayani (Eds.). *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education: Research and Perspectives on Identity, Leadership, and Success*, pp. 57-94. Copyright 2012 by NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.