

CONFLUENCE OF INFLUENCE: INDIAN-AMERICAN YOUTHS' PERCEPTION,
NEGOTIATION, AND TRANSFORMATION OF ARRANGED MARRIAGE
TRADITIONS IN MODERN AMERICAN SOCIETY

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Confluence of Influence: Indian-American Youths' Perception, Negotiation, and Transformation of Arranged Marriage Traditions in Modern American Society

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This dissertation examines how second generation Indian-American youth in the United States are negotiating and transforming the practice of arranged marriage. The tradition of arranged marriage has been modeled in their families for generations, but these youth are growing up in a cultural context that highly values freedom of choice and embraces autonomy, as well as validates various alternative lifestyles other than marriage. The bicultural identities of second generation Indian-American youth provide a framework for their decisions about future marriage. Little is known about how Indian-American youth view the preservation of cultural and familial marriage traditions. Through the use of a three part survey on the topics of marriage, choice and emotional expression, as well as in-depth interviews, this project explored how Indian-American youth formulate their constructions of marriage, and how they are situated amid many influences of modern western society. A social constructivist approach was utilized to elicit detailed descriptions of the perceptions and insights of the youth subjects, aged 15 to 21. This enabled the formulation of theory grounded in the lived experiences of these youth. Adults aged 30-61 also completed surveys and interviews to provide parental viewpoints in order to discern generational differences. Subjects were located in New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. The primary finding of this research is that second

generation Indian-American youth are not completely rejecting or indiscriminately resisting the practice of arranged marriage. They are open to matchmaking, but they desire choice in the process. They embrace traditional family values, consider the guidance of their elders, and desire parental approval and blessing of their future marriage decisions. They negotiate parental rules, expectations and communications in a variety of ways to exert agency in decisions related to participation in premarital social activities. Though the influences of globalism and western culture impact how Indian-American youth shape their opinions and decisions, these forces have not erased their allegiance to Indian traditions.

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Introduction: Indian-American Youth and Arranged Marriage in the 21st Century

In their journey toward adulthood, Indian-American youth face numerous complexities of modern social life in the United States. These youth are caught up in an intricate web of compelling cultural forces that make them different from their American peers, different from their parents, and different from their relatives who reside in India. Life in contemporary American society offers Indian-American youth several social opportunities their parents did not have, as well as a cultural context that highly values freedom of choice and embraces autonomy. For them, it is a life that can be fraught with social and emotional quandaries as they prepare to make decisions regarding relationships and future marriage.

Straddling two distinct cultures, Indian-American youth face social struggles unlike those of previous generations of Indian-Americans, coupled with assumptions and hopes that they will embrace and advance the family values of their heritage. Daily life for these Indian-American youth can differentiate them from their western counterparts in both subtle and obvious ways, especially when it comes to social choices and practices. As study participant Shilpa (15, Hindu) succinctly explained when comparing herself to her non-Indian contemporaries, “I don’t have the same choices as some of my friends; I don’t do things like they do.”

Shilpa and her peers are part of a generation in transition, one in which navigating the usual pathways to adulthood is marked by immense social and cultural change. Second-generation Indian-American youth have grown up in a culture which deeply values marriage and continues to have the dominant expectation that most people will marry (Mines and Lamb 2002). However, they also have been exposed to an American society

which highly values individualism, questions the imperative for matrimony, and has deinstitutionalized marriage to such a degree that the processes of partnership and uncoupling are questioned and deconstructed through a variety of changing definitions and expectations (Cherlin 2009).

Social and cultural messages proclaimed through various forms of media often contend that marriage is unnecessary, constraining or confining, and that it no longer has significant social value or benefits, particularly for women. The decline in marriage is linked to many factors, including but not limited to increases in women's employment and their salaries, the high divorce rate, public policies that support unmarried childbearing and single mothers, and significantly changing attitudes toward sex which allow for cohabitation without marriage (Waite 1995; DePaulo 2006). As Blankenhorn noted, "In today's discussion of marriage in the United States, by far the biggest problem is the widespread refusal to respect or even acknowledge the institutionality of marriage. It's as if we have forgotten what a social institution is" (2007:97).

However, in Indian culture, the institution of marriage and having children within the bounds of that institution remain highly valued, and it serves the greater purpose of generating social, emotional and economic alliances (Ghewalla 2004). Furthermore, Blankenhorn adds that "marriage in human societies is commonly a wealth-generating, asset-building institution," and the "economic dimensions of the marital bond typically both thicken and help stabilize marriage as a social institution" (2007:102-103). Because these aspects of marriage may be viewed as less important now, and more emphasis is placed on romantic love, self-fulfillment, and the emotional bonds of marriage, there is possibility for a potentially significant shift in the attitudes of second-generation Indian-

Americans. If they accept a more modernized, individualized and western influenced approach of choosing a spouse that includes dating or cohabitation, or if they choose to forego marriage altogether, then they might have to grapple with the possibility of destabilizing the very institution on which their family and social lives have been built.

Another important social aspect to consider is how the structure of the American family has undergone dramatic transformations over the past several decades. Newman, Roberts and Syré noted over twenty years ago that the normative nuclear family that was so prevalent in the 1950s, “now takes a position alongside a variety of other family forms such as cohabitating heterosexual couples, cohabitating gay or lesbian couples, child-free married couples, single-parent households, blended or binuclear households, and extended family households” (1993:951). Since then, these changes have continued to force a broadening of the social and legal definitions of family “from a traditional focus on biological, legal, and spatial relatedness to a view that recognizes the importance of long-standing affective ties among co-residing persons in the absence of biological or legal ties” (1993:951). More recently Klinenberg (2012) highlighted the growth in single households, and notes the increasing trend toward solo living, with marriage or other partnership becoming only an interlude through various life stages of people living alone.

Thus the analytic lens through which Indian-American youth view marriage may be clouded with confusion through the blurring of once traditional definitions of what constitutes a family, and how to form a family. The personal challenges of figuring out how to function in a western society that now accepts very broad definitions and processes that lead to marriage and family creation is not an easy task for many Indian-American youth who have been born and raised in very traditional families. Confronting

these realities could have an effect on both their individual and collective thinking regarding constructions of marriage, with the potential to shake existing patterns and customs to their core.

Also contributing to changes in the marriage landscape for Indian-American youth is the fact that these adolescents are more skilled in the use of technology than any other previous generation. This provides them with unprecedented effortless and global access to others, and exposes them to a constant media blitz of information, popular culture, and entertainment that glamorizes sexuality and individual satisfaction. Ubiquitous and clandestine use of mobile devices and social media can impact developing attitudes about sexuality and future mate selection. Exposure to content prohibited by parents has the potential to illuminate cultural clashes and create perplexing predicaments about marriage and family, and may impact youth behavior as well as challenge parental authority.

Because of these influential elements of modern life, Indian-American youth travel a very different road to adulthood and eventual marriage than their parents. The struggles that these youth encounter as they mature can arouse anxiety, ambiguity, contradiction and resistance, but also can lead to reshaping cultural identities, traditions and practices, and to redefining relations of gender and power.

Intersection of Influences and Issues

The social reality of a myriad of influences upon Indian-American youth is particularly elucidated through the ways in which they learn to relate with the opposite sex, and to think about choices regarding marriage and family life in the future. Sensitive issues of autonomy, agency, choice, emotion, love, duty, loyalty, respect and obligation are brought to the forefront of their lives and that of their parents, as they begin to assert

their individuality and independence. The intersections of these issues can affect family life at the most visceral levels. Concerns that emerge from such issues put forth matters that have the potential to create significant intergenerational discord and conflict, as Indian-American youth attempt to establish their own unique identity and begin to deviate from parental expectations.

Because of all of these issues, Indian-American adolescents' constructions of the meaning and importance of marriage and their emerging relationship choices may differ substantially from those of previous generations. For hundreds of years, Indian family alliances were formed and preserved primarily through arranged marriages (Coontz 2005). Historically, Indian marriages have been about the union of two families, rather than the joining of two individuals (Kalyanam 2004). Arranged marriage is defined by Seth as "a marriage organized by a third party and based on considerations other than love, intimacy, and physical or sexual attraction. In other words, arranged marriages exclude pretty much everything that we normally associate with the idea of marriage" (2008:7). Seth further explains that once a person agrees to engage in the arranged marriage process, then parents, relatives and close family friends preselect and investigate potential candidates. They carefully scrutinize the prospects by consulting extensive biographies, photos, third-party testimonials and possibly horoscopes. The final decision to select a spouse is "based on a variety of criteria, including age, education, professional prospects and families" (2008:8). The assumption in arranged marriage is that feelings of love and intimacy will develop as the husband and wife build their lives and family together. This anticipated outcome, coupled with shared

socioeconomic, religious, political and cultural backgrounds, contribute to the expectation that an arranged marriage will succeed and flourish.

But in light of continually changing social structures and related issues, there is significant uncertainty about whether the practice of arranged marriage will prevail in years to come, and many questions surround this central issue. Will today's Indian-American youth desire to maintain traditions of arranged marriage that have been the foundation of their family life? How will they shift the discourse that shapes expectations for marriage? As second generation Indian-Americans consider their relationship possibilities, it's likely that they will rearrange the tradition of arranged marriage into a process that includes asserting their agency to a greater degree than their ancestors. Their practical considerations of love and marriage may be quite different than what their parents and grandparents thought were important. How they will engage in the process of mate selection, and what compromises they may make to reflect their bicultural identity as well as their social, cultural, religious and racial subjectivities are examined in this study. Moreover, it is possible that the fundamental meanings of marriage may change for Indian-American youth as they grow into adulthood and begin to detangle conflicting cultural and generational perspectives. To what extent they will conform to tradition and define the limits of change and choice regarding premarital and post-marital activity (including, dating, singlehood, cohabitation and divorce), are among the many questions that are considered comprehensively in this study.

Additionally, I aim to analyze the confluence of influences that impact traditional Indian marriage and family life in America today. I attempt to illuminate the struggles encountered by Indian-American adolescents in their personal efforts to define the social

and cultural values that are important to them. Furthermore, I scrutinize the controversies and emotional conflicts they face as they emerge into adulthood and make relationship choices that may clash with dearly held family practices and values. Through this broad and detailed study, my goal is to shed light upon how Indian-American youth view the preservation of cultural and familial marriage traditions, and how their constructions of marriage are formulated, situated and sustained amid the innumerable influences of modern American society.

In order to provide a thorough picture of the issues described above, I also delve into the dilemmas faced by parents of Indian-American youth as they work to raise their children to meet expectations of marriage in adulthood, while they simultaneously aim to preserve a rich history of tradition and deeply felt connections to the culture that gives definition and dimension to their day-to-day lives. By combining the perspectives of youth and parents, this study highlights the fundamental formation of Indian-American families of the future, with emphasis upon integral notions of how marriage traditions are preserved or transformed in light of a changing world.

Subjects of the Study

In beginning a discussion of defining influences upon Indian-Americans, it is necessary to identify the segment of the population that is the subject of this study. The degree to which Indian-Americans are “westernized” or “Americanized” depends in part on whether they were born in India or America (George 2006:73). Those who are referred to as first generation were born in India and came to the United States as second wave immigrants in the mid to late 1980s. Their offspring were born in the United States, and are described as second generation. They are coming to maturity now and

approaching marriageable ages beginning in the late first decade and early second decade of the new millennium. Eventually their offspring will form the third generation of Indians in America, and for those children, their parents' culture and their peer culture will be more American than any other prior generations (George 2006).

Though definitions of second generation vary in the literature, the "classic definition" refers to those born in the United States of immigrant parents (Maira 2002:212). Maira indicates that it is "important to acknowledge that exposure to multiple spheres of socialization in childhood," including in American schools and at home, coupled with a recent family history of immigration, is a defining feature of second-generation identity (2002:212). She adds that second generation youth "come of age in the United States" and "share in the rites of passage of American high school," thus making them different from those who came to the United States as young adults (2002:17).

For the purpose of this study, the term "Indian-American youth" refers to second-generation youth born in the United States, and the terms "Indian-American parents" or "Indian-American adults" refer to adults who came from India to America as part of the second wave of immigrants in the 1980s. The terms "youth," "adolescents," and "teens" are used interchangeably. Youth participants in this study have a minimum age of fifteen and maximum age of twenty-one. The terms "adult" and "parent" also are used interchangeably, since all of the adults who participated in this study are parents.

Elements of Focus and Theoretical Framework

In this dissertation I study Indian-Americans' current perceptions and constructions of arranged marriage, by pursuing two lines of inquiry. The first concentrates upon Indian-American adolescents to examine intersections among various elements of influence

which impact their daily lives, and which contribute to the nature and range of expectations about marriage and family life that are common to them as a distinct cultural group. This line of inquiry seeks to uncover and understand components of these youths' lives that contribute to their sense of choice, autonomy and agency, which may influence their perceptions of expectations placed upon them in the realm of premarital activity and eventual marriage. This line of questioning also is intended to uncover multiple layers of dilemmas that adolescents may experience in the process of defining their wants and needs in social activities that precede eventual mate selection. Additionally it is intended to bring to light their attitudes about requirements for potential mate selection, such as matching specific elements in backgrounds that are deemed necessary for a suitable match. The discoveries that are gleaned from these investigations will be important to the field of childhood studies, and serve to increase understanding of some of the social, cultural and emotional aspects of the lives of Indian-American youth.

The second line of inquiry focuses upon parents of Indian-American youth, to investigate their perceptions of arranged marriage in modern society, and their thoughts regarding how they impart knowledge, values and expectations to their children in the areas of premarital activity and future marriage. Taken together, these two lines of inquiry enabled this research to accomplish the goal of discerning if, how and why traditions of arranged marriage still operate in contemporary American society, and how they are in a process of transformation. These inquiries also provide information regarding how the collision of Indian and American cultures are impacting this tradition and creating problematic or transformative situations for families.

The following objectives are addressed concurrently with both youth and their parents:

1) An inquiry into attitudes and perspectives about arranged marriages, love marriages and alternative lifestyles such as cohabitation, single life, divorce and homosexual relationships; 2) an exploration of orientation regarding choice and autonomy in decision making related to arranged marriage and premarital social practices that lead to mate selection, such as dating, social networking and socializing with the opposite sex; and 3) an investigation of emotional expression between youth and parents within communication interactions about dating, marriage, choice and autonomy.

By using a social constructivist approach that intends to bring forth richly detailed descriptions of the perceptions and insights of Indian-American youth and their parents about arranged marriage, I formulate theory grounded in their social realities that are part and parcel of their daily lives. My hope is that information gained from this study will contribute significantly to understanding Indian-Americans' current cultural beliefs and practices about arranged marriage, and further, that it will provide insight into the future of this tradition for second generation Indian-American youth.

Personal Interest and Qualifications to Undertake Study

Beginning in 2000, I became deeply acquainted with Indian culture through several years of charity work that enabled me to visit many metropolitan cities and rural villages in the southern part of the continent. On seven different trips to India, I steadily increased my knowledge of the system of arranged marriage, and also observed and participated in wedding ceremonies and celebrations. Additionally, I participated directly in the arranged marriage process of a close friend by accompanying him abroad to meet the woman he would marry less than a month later. I also was privy to the arranged marriage of another friend, and the subsequent collapse of the marriage and eventual

divorce that caused an explosion of emotion and drama, which had far-reaching effects on the families involved.

The concept of arranged marriage was quite foreign to me until I began to observe and understand how commonplace it was throughout India. Then I became particularly interested in how the system operated on many levels. Specifically I attempted to discern youths' attitudes toward it, with emphasis upon their perceptions of choice and autonomy related to marriage decisions. As I saw first-hand how much India was growing and changing every time I visited, and my interest in arranged marriage also grew, it was natural to extend my curiosity and become inquisitive about how this tradition functions in the United States, especially in light of the growing diaspora of Indians here, as well as so many differences between Indian and American culture.

My experiences in India allowed me to develop knowledge of and sensitivity to the Indian culture, as well as a high comfort level in communicating with its people. I felt that I had sufficient understanding of some of the cultural nuances of behavior and communication to develop an easy rapport with the participants, and to elicit their responses to both the survey and interview questions in an environment that felt safe for them to be honest in their responses and that was sincere in its academic integrity. However, I am aware of limitations that may be inherent in the interview process since I am an outsider, a White woman seeking to understand traditions of a racially and culturally different population. Though it is impossible to eliminate my own perceptual lens, as Maxwell (2005) cautions, I also realized the importance of positioning myself in such a way to preserve the integrity and validity of the study.

In all of my personal interactions, I took care to establish connections with the participants and gain their confidence by sharing my own experiences of Indian culture and my research intentions. With few exceptions this approach was well received; it allowed me to gain access to participants and to encourage them to share their opinions and feelings about culturally sensitive issues. Furthermore, through my former workplace I was acquainted with several Indian-American families who graciously spoke with me at length about their marriage traditions and invited me to their homes for discussion. Additionally I acquired valuable experience with interviewing techniques and working with Indians through independent study courses in my doctoral program. With well developed skills in interviewing and observation gained through my extensive work as a counselor, I felt quite prepared to undertake this study.

Significance of Study

Because the topic of arranged marriage touches upon multiple dimensions of social life and social interaction, this study is significant in several ways. First, it gives voice to Indian-American youth, who have had very little representation in scholarly literature. The study offers a rare peek into the lives of Indian-American youth, who provided articulate, insightful and often very personal descriptions of their experiences, opinions and feelings regarding premarital activity and future marriage; thus this study offers a unique contribution to the field of childhood studies. Second, it imparts insights regarding the intersection and transmission of Indian and American cultures, and their impact upon the preservation of traditional arranged marriage. This provides meaningful information that may suggest interesting trends for the future, which will add to the scholarship on the institution of marriage in the United States.

Third, it presents detailed data which contributes to the literature on adolescents' development of perceptions of autonomy and choice, which largely has been based on samples of White, American youth. Fourth, the study reveals information and insight regarding the underlying emotions and culturally nuanced expressions of emotions which drive communication about sensitive issues of autonomy and choice related to social life that are particularly important to adolescents. Finally, this study has general significance for the literature on the Indian-American community, particularly the second generation, on which little research has been done.¹ It contributes to the overall understanding of the cultural milieu of Indian-Americans, their lived experiences related to marriage and family, and their desires to maintain as well as transform cherished marriage traditions.

Chapter Outline

This generation of Indian-American youth will be faced with relational decisions that are uncommon to previous generations due to changes in beliefs, negotiations and modern interpretations of values, and continuing influences of an increasingly globalized world in the twenty-first century. As these youth move toward adulthood, they will have the power to strengthen and stabilize the marriage traditions that their parents wish to pass on to them, to dilute and erode them if they so choose, or to change them in ways they deem more suitable. In the chapters that follow, I address these issues in greater depth.

In Chapter One, relevant research that provides contexts for the theoretical framework of the study is reviewed. The broad range of topics included in this review draws upon scholarship in the areas of anthropology, sociology, psychology and cross-cultural

¹ See Kurien (2005), who studied second-generation Indian-American youth and their struggles with identity formation and acculturation.

studies. The research provides foundations to understand not only the cultural backdrop in which Indian-Americans function, but also etic and emic views of arranged marriage. The methodology employed in this study is outlined in Chapter Two, and describes the mixed method of quantitative and qualitative data collection. The four chapters that follow provide rich descriptions of the experiences, opinions and feelings of the study participants about a variety of topics surrounding the concept of arranged marriage.

Chapter Three describes the challenges of dating in western culture and how Indian-American youth and parents navigate the minefields of dating behavior and emerging sexuality. Limits to social interactions, and the place of dating as a precursor to marriage are discussed in depth. The focus of Chapter Four is upon the conceptions, variations and requirements of arranged marriages for study participants. Stories of arranged marriages of the adults in this study are highlighted, along with opinions of youth regarding their parents' arrangements, as well as their viewpoints on specific requirements for their future marriages. Chapter Five considers issues at the heart of arranged marriage, including choice, agency and autonomy. Emotional struggles and communication challenges that surround the transmission of traditional marriage values and expectations to youth are presented to illuminate the paths to finding a common ground between the generations. Chapter Six examines taboos in Indian culture regarding modern relationship alternatives to arranged marriage, including cohabitation, singlehood, divorce and homosexual partnerships.

Through each chapter, the navigation and transformation of cultural notions regarding the arranged marriage process are highlighted to expose new ways of thinking that ultimately will influence the formation of future Indian-American families. The ages and

religions of each participant are used as a point of reference in each of their quotes.

Names of all participants have been changed to protect their privacy, with the exception of authors Sam and Mary George, who generously contributed their time and assistance to this project, and whose research is cited in the study. Additionally, the terms “western culture” and “Indian culture” are used very broadly, to refer to the characteristics, beliefs, knowledge and shared patterns of behavior and understanding of people, which are learned through processes of socialization. These elements both identify and differentiate groups from one another.² Use of these terms is not intended to wholly portray the full range of defining features that are represented in either western or Indian cultures.

² See livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html. Retrieved February 6, 2017.

Chapter One:

Literature Review: Contexts for Arranged Marriage in Indian-American Families

The concept of arranged marriage may seem anomalous in the modern era, but it still is common in many cultures around the world (Coontz 2005). While there is a considerable body of work which addresses arranged marriage in the contexts of religious practice, cultural traditions and migration studies, relatively little research has been done to illuminate the voices of contemporary youth who may be contemplating the possibility of an arranged marriage in their futures. This study focuses upon second generation Indian-American youth who have grown up within families who have maintained the tradition of arranged marriage, and it explores attitudes about continuing the tradition in their own future marriages.

Little is known about how today's Indian-American youth and their parents are addressing the subject of arranged marriage, and how their conversations, feelings and desires may lay the groundwork for the trajectory of this tradition to continue in the future. Maira notes that the "experiences of Indian-American youth are inadequately represented not only in academic research but also in popular literature and the mass media" (2002:17). One of the objectives of this study is to provide a detailed and nuanced picture of their lived experiences, in order to shed light upon the construction of their attitudes about continuing the tradition of arranged marriage. Another aim of the research is to demystify the concept and practice of arranged marriage as it exists within the participants' families, and to determine how their past histories influence the future of marriage for second-generation Indian-American youth.

Existing research reveals that second generation Indian-American youth and parents often are caught between expectations of following traditions in premarital social practice

and marriage, and the pull toward adopting western cultural practices of dating and coupling that allow more freedom and latitude. This dissertation builds upon existing studies on Indian-Americans and arranged marriage, with the aim to extend and deepen understanding of how the tradition may continue for youth in the future. In this chapter, I discuss some of the literature in broad areas of psychology, anthropology, sociology and religion, which frame this study.

Theoretical Framework and Existing Research

The focus of this study is to understand Indian-American youths' current cultural beliefs and adults' perspectives about arranged marriage practices. I explored the attitudes of youth and adults through a lengthy survey which posed questions regarding their opinions about dating, marriage, autonomy, choice, and emotional expression as they relate to continuing the tradition of arranged marriage. Additionally, I explored perspectives of their social worlds through in-depth interviews. These conversations yielded detailed information from participants about deeply personal experiences and feelings about marriage, as well as the closely related topics that were addressed in the surveys. By shedding light on the thoughts and feelings of the participants, this study aims to provide insight and generate theory regarding how the practice of arranged marriage may manifest in the lives of second generation Indian-American youth when they come of age to marry.

Grounded Theory

In the qualitative facet of the study, I used a social constructivist approach, generating theory thoroughly grounded in the lived experiences of Indian-American youth and parents. Grounded theory arises from systematically gathered and analyzed data, which

offers insight and understanding about an area of study (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The aim of this approach according to Bernard and Ryan is to “discover theories - causal explanations - grounded in empirical data, about how things work” (2010:267). They further state that the data for a grounded theory study “comes from in-depth interviews about people’s lived experiences and about the social processes that shape those experiences” (2010:267). These scholars state that grounded theory is the most widely used method in the social sciences “for collecting and analyzing interview data about how people experience the mundane and the exotic, the boring and the enchanting moments of life” (2010:269). Thus, this theoretical framework is appropriate to meeting the objectives of this study.

Social Exchange Theory

The process of arranged marriage also may be examined through the lens of social exchange theory. According to Allen and Henderson, this theory “posits that all human relationships can be understood in terms of a cost-benefit analysis and the exchange of resources available to participants” (2016:126). This theory is useful for examining relationships from their inception, as well as assisting in understanding how they grow, shift and change over time, and also end (Allen and Henderson 2016). One of the dominant premises of this theory is the notion that people act out of self-interest, and they are interdependent upon one another (Lawler and Thye 1999). In practical terms, Allen and Henderson state that “this means that individuals have something of value to bring to a relationship, and during interaction they decide whether or not to exchange those ‘goods’ and in what amounts” (2016:126). At the center of these relationship considerations is social exchange; for example, “emotional support, connections, trust

and obligations are all elements in a relationship that can be exchanged between two people” (2016:126). These authors also add that “both parties need to perceive the exchange as fair and equitable for it to continue, and these perceptions are often defined at the cultural or social level” (2016:128).

Allen and Henderson offer an additional perspective derived from economist Gary Becker’s exchange/economic model of marriage, which postulates that the major gain of marriage depends upon “the mutual dependence of spouses, arising out of their specialized functions,” and the exchange of these functions within the family (2016:132). These functions evolve over time; for example, women’s role in the marketplace has steadily increased their economic independence, which has blurred the lines between traditional gender roles of homemaker and breadwinner. This has bearing on their decisions of if or when to marry. Thus, potential partners “seek to maximize the utility of their marriage by comparing benefits and costs” and then once married, they bargain with each other regarding the distribution of their individual and shared resources (2016:132). Therefore, “potential mates are hierarchically arranged, compared, and evaluated according to their wealth, education and other valuable characteristics; in essence, the courting process involves bargaining for the best deal on a partner, within the restrictions imposed by market availability” (2016:132).

Nakonezny and Denton state that the most basic difference between social and economic exchange theories is that “economic exchange embodies specified obligations, whereas social exchange embodies unspecified obligations” (2008:407). Through social exchange, one partner provides benefits to another, and although there is an expectation of reciprocity, the exact nature of the return is not as clearly specified as it is in an

economic exchange that involves products or services purchased in the marketplace (Nakonezny and Denton 2008).

When Indian-Americans engage in the marriage process, there is careful consideration of what benefits a potential spouse brings to the union, regardless of whether the marriage is arranged by others, or a self-chosen one. Some of the elements of a marriage candidate's background that may be evaluated include religion, education, socio-economic status, caste and family of origin. Much attention is given to the process of weighing pros and cons in order to make the best choice, which also is an important part of the social exchange process. Within this perspective, an arranged marriage may be viewed as the combined outcome of preferences, resources, bargaining power, and strength of assets and liabilities that are considered in reaching a mutual agreement (Allen and Henderson 2016).

In a marriage based on autonomous choice, the emotions of individuals and the resources they bring to the union are critical considerations in evaluating the potential for success. To counter the cognitive, rational calculation of costs and benefits, Lawler proposes an affect theory of social exchange, in order to "incorporate emotions as an explicit, central feature of social exchange processes" (2001:321). He notes that "emotions produced by exchange structures and processes are critical to an understanding of how and when social exchanges promote or inhibit solidarity in relations or groups" (2001:322).

Assimilation Theory

Recent studies on Indian-Americans discussed in this section focus upon the experiences of immigrant parents and their second-generation children, who live in large

metropolitan areas of New York, California and Illinois. These locales in the United States have large populations of Indian-Americans, which prompted an investigation of assimilation theory as another frame of reference for this study. The concept of assimilation, also known as integration, has been used to describe the processes by which foreign immigrants incorporate into a host society and come to resemble one another.³ Greenman and Xie note this process has both social and economic dimensions, but at its most basic level, classical assimilation describes “the social processes through which immigrants become incorporated into mainstream American society, the way in which they ‘become Americans’” (2006:12).

These scholars state that the “most complete and refined theoretical account of the process of assimilation is found in Milton Gordon’s (1964) *Assimilation in American Life*” (2006:12). They explain that Gordon identified seven specific steps in the process of assimilation, which takes place in a fairly regular sequence. The first is known as acculturation, which “involved the immigrant groups’ gradual adoption of the cultural habits of the core subsociety” (2006:12). This process does not necessarily require that immigrants relinquish fundamental cultural attributes, such as religion (Greenman and Xie 2006). However, an important part of acculturation is the adoption of the English language, followed by later generations strongly preferring English (Greenman and Xie 2006).

Greenman and Xie further describe Gordon’s framework, stating that “acculturation laid the groundwork for the next step of the assimilation process” . . . which is structural assimilation (2006:13). This is defined as large scale entry into institutions of the host society, on the primary group level (Greenman and Xie 2006). This increasing contact

³ see www.migrationpolicy.org

between groups eventually leads to other forms of assimilation, particularly intermarriage, which in turn, gradually erases the social boundaries which previously separated the immigrant group from the host society (Greenman and Xie 2006). Alba and Nee define assimilation somewhat differently, calling it “the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of ethnic/racial distinction, and the cultural and social differences that express it (1997:863). Greenman and Xie state that “a key factor in determining the effect of assimilation should be the starting position of immigrants, relative to natives, when they first enter the United States” (2006:10).

In her study of Indian-American immigrants in Chicago, Rangaswamy explains that “on the issue of social assimilation, Indians appear well satisfied but that satisfaction does not necessarily stem from becoming assimilated into American society” (2000:128). She states that this may be due to “the development of a parallel ethnic society, in which Indians are happy to fulfill their needs for social recognition” (2000:128). In her view, Indian-Americans still have “a strong allegiance to their own culture, but they stay in touch with the American world, especially because of their work and their children” (2000:128). However, Rangaswamy also indicates that there is much ambivalence about certain personal issues, and they struggle to “arrive at some resolution and reconciliation of their own position and that of their children, especially on issues of dating and marriage” (2000:129).

Rangaswamy states that although levels of assimilation and acculturation differ in her sample according to length of stay in the United States and income level, Indians are “held together by a strong common bond: the heritage of strong religious backgrounds, belief in common cultural forms and a collective effort to perpetuate them in the United

States as well as a firm and continuing connection to the motherland” (2000:129). Alba and Nee (1997) stress the point that the incorporation of immigrant groups requires the mainstream population to accept the desire of immigrants to maintain their cultural heritage, beliefs and practices that are important to them.

In this study, I believe that the social theories of constructivism, exchange and assimilation can complement one another. Social constructivism considers processes of gaining knowledge through social interactions. Social exchange theory focuses on the analysis of benefits that are gleaned from social interactions. Assimilation theory addresses integration of groups within society and social interaction is a key element of successful assimilation. The common ground of all of these theories is that they take into account different dynamics of relationships and interactions among people, and they shed light upon how people and experiences are socially situated.

Recent Studies with Indian-American Youth and Adults

Sangeeta Gupta’s (1999a) edited collection of essays from several contributors provides a range of viewpoints on topics related to arranged marriage practices in South Asian culture. These include adolescent development of South Asian girls, sexuality, dating, marriage, divorce and intergenerational conflicts resulting from differences of opinion about the transference and maintenance of cultural traditions. Gupta’s volume includes two essays of her own which build on research from her doctoral studies. She studied Indian-American undergraduate, graduate and professional women and men between the ages of 17 and 34 years old, to discover how they are negotiating conflicting marital traditions (1999c:194). All of her participants were single, from two-parent families in California, North Carolina, Washington, Illinois and Texas (1999c:194).

Gupta researched attitudes towards gender roles, heterosexual relationship experiences, marriage and divorce through an anonymous questionnaire which was distributed by mail and at meetings of South Asian groups (1999c:194). Approximately 1,380 were distributed, but only 160 (12%) were returned; Gupta attributes this to reluctance to complete information that addressed sexual experience and relationships (1999c:194). She speculates that those who did return the survey may have been more open to sharing such personal data, and therefore her results may be skewed towards more progressive views (1999c:194).

Gupta also conducted informal interviews after the questionnaires were completed, during which participants shared feelings about the complexity of struggles that “Indian-American women face in their interpersonal relationships as they attempt to negotiate between two cultures” (1999b:141). She concluded that Indian-Americans are more progressive than their parents regarding marital relationships, but they also “are still strongly influenced by their heritage” (1999b:142). Furthermore, Gupta notes that her participants indicated they “are willing to be introduced to prospective partners, want to have more participation in the selection of their spouses, and are moving toward more egalitarian relationships” (1999b:143). However, they also indicated that others of Indian origin would “make the best marital partners as they share a common culture, language and religion” (1999b:142).

Gupta’s research appeared to closely parallel my study, but I could not locate her dissertation anywhere online. My attempts to contact her to discuss our similar research were unsuccessful. Gupta now heads the Gupta Consulting Group in Southern California,

a firm that specializes in diversity and intercultural consulting, and executive coaching.⁴ Gupta's additional contributions to the literature on Indians and Indian-Americans include a volume on cultural competency in the workplace, and children's books on multiculturalism.

In her ethnography of second generation Indian-American youth in New York City, Sunaina Maira (2002) focuses her study on the vibrant South Asian subculture that is displayed at bhangra parties, which are hosted in some of the city's nightclubs and on college campuses. These are events where young South Asians congregate to socialize and dance to music which mixes Hindi film and folk music with other popular American styles including reggae, techno and hip-hop.⁵ Some participants in my study mentioned similar events which have been hosted by Indian-American youth groups at the schools they attend.

Maira states that "the 'Indian party scene' is a major component of Indian-American youth culture in New York City, and a significant context in which social networks are created" (2002:12). She notes that "ethnic as well as racial and gender ideologies are produced and refashioned" in these settings (2002:12). She further observes that the "role of remix music in the subculture of Indian parties is a critical site for analysis, opening up debates about reinventing ethnicities, performing gender roles, and enacting class aspirations" (2002:12). In this study, Maira explores the challenges Indian-American youth face in managing contradictions of gender roles and sexuality, which

⁴ See www.guptaconsulting.com

⁵ Bhangra music traditionally includes three instruments; these are two types of drums (the dhol and dholki), and a stringed instrument (thumri). Lyrics typically celebrate village life, women and the beauty of Punjab (Maira 2002).

also have surfaced in my research through discussions about double standards of behavior and the lack of direct communication about sexual issues. Maira also examines their simultaneous negotiation of the “collective nostalgia for India (re)created by their parents and the coming-of-age rituals of American youth culture” (2002:15-16). In vivid descriptions of the Desi ⁶ party scene, Maira demonstrates that through engagement with this particular Indian-American youth subculture, “second generation youth perform a deep ambivalence toward ethnicity and nationality” (2002:16). She analyzes and illuminates their attempts to shape their evolving identities by negotiating tension between the desire to be ‘cool’ and the expectation to conform to nostalgic notions of Indian ethnic authenticity (2002:16).

In her ethnographic account of South Asian American teen culture in the Silicon Valley during the dot-com boom at the turn of the twenty-first century, Shilpani Shankar (2008) highlights youth voices and perspectives which she gathered from her experiences of “kickin’ it” ⁷ with diverse Desi teenagers at three area high schools. Shankar investigates interactions among Desi teens in their social cliques, as well as how they aim to situate themselves among variant meanings of race, class and community (2008:71-72). She also analyzes the influences of cultural practices, community values, language and material culture upon the formation of their conceptions of success and upward mobility, and the shaping of their personal identity.

⁶ Maira (2002) defines ‘Desi’ as “a colloquial term for someone ‘native’ to South Asia” and one that has “taken hold among many second generation youth in the diaspora of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, or Indo-Caribbean descent” (2).

⁷ Popular term among this group for spending time together or ‘hanging out’ in groups or cliques (Pp. 8, 67).

Of particular interest to this study are her findings which address a spectrum of issues from community gossip to views on dating and arranged marriage. She examines how teens attempt to negotiate restrictions on dating, and reconcile these with longer term objectives of becoming fully fledged adult members of their communities (2008:192). Shankar notes that one of the most salient aspects of teen life in the communities she studied is the maintenance of an unblemished reputation (2008:23). She writes that Desi teens, particularly girls, are subject to many social rules and restrictions imposed by their families and closely knit communities. One of the tactics that teens use to avoid gossip and still date or stay out past curfews is to keep their social lives on the “DL” or “down low” (2008:23). Shankar further elaborates that rules about “abstaining from dating and premarital sex, marrying within their community, and following appropriate codes of dress and interaction are not always followed to the letter, but youth rarely reject them outright” (2008:192). She cites a range of expectations and conflicted feelings about arranged marriage, from those who fully expect to have one, to those who strongly object.

However, she states that even those Desi teens who are “less interested in being adult members of their community do not want to jeopardize their parents’ standing” so they attempt to be considerate of parental wishes and viewpoints (2008:192). In that sense, Desi teens remain “invested in their communities as well as in the numerous mechanisms that ensure that community continues” (2008:192). Though her study is particular to the time period of 1991-2001, Shankar revisits her participants several years later to provide updates about them, and to learn how conceptions of gender, race and class have changed in light of post 9/11 Silicon Valley life.

Important themes in the lives of Indian immigrants in New York City from 1965 through 2000 are documented in Madhulika Khandelwal's (2002) comprehensive look at what it means to be Indian in the United States. While conducting extensive interviews with Indian immigrants and their children, she provides thoughtful insights into the transplantation of Indian culture onto the New York boroughs of Manhattan and Queens. She clarifies that her book is "not only about Indian immigrants, but also about the particular urban context of New York City as it shapes this immigrant population" (2002:8). Through her research, she demonstrates how this continually growing Indian community is thoroughly embracing their ethnic heritage, with larger family networks and a stronger religious focus. She outlines changes in immigrant family structure, and also examines the role of gender in family and community issues (2002:11).

Khandelwal points out that in the 1990s, "gender became a pivotal issue in Indian-American politics," as immigrant Indian-American women moved from working in the home to more visible roles in the workforce and in community engagement (2002:124). In describing the assimilation of Indian-American women into New York City as neither "monochromatic stories" nor "linear transitions from India to modern Western society," she adds that the "experiences and viewpoints of female Indian immigrants varied widely," with notable differences among older and younger women, and among professional and working class women (2002:124). She further states that "few women were inclined to reject wholesale their cultural traditions for American social patterns and values" (2002:124). Instead, Indian women faced challenges of "redefining their traditions and roles in the migration context" (2002:124). Nonetheless, a big point of intra-familial tension often occurred over the notion of how "very Americanized"

relatives had become (2002:127). Furthermore, while conservatives in the immigrant community chastised Indian women for becoming Americanized, judgments about them tended to focus on their “alleged deviation from accepted Indian gender roles,” and on “their firm commitment to family and marriage” (2002:137).

Similar to other scholars noted here, Khandelwal (2002) writes that “Indians’ widespread belief that sexual freedom was a hallmark of American society placed them on guard with Americans, as it did with their own U.S.-reared children, particularly their daughters” (2002:138). Additionally, she illustrates that “disputes between immigrant parents and their children over social behavior set traditional expectations against accusations of interference and undue control” (2002:153).

Khandelwal argues that the experience of Indian immigrants living in America over four decades has altered traditional Indian marriage practices, and that “the younger generation stressed the importance of choice and love in marriage” (2002:153).

Nonetheless, she also indicates that traditional arranged marriage practices are persistent, as evidenced through continued advertisements for prospective brides and grooms through matrimonial advertisements in North American Indian newspapers, local marriage conventions, and multigenerational social gatherings in homes and rented spaces which serve to bring Indians of the same social and religious stratum together (2002:154-156).

In another broad study of Indian-Americans’ assimilation in the United States, Padma Rangaswamy (2000) provides rich historical documentation of the diverse group of Indians who have migrated to and settled in Chicago. She draws upon census statistics as well as substantial data from surveys and interviews that she conducted to gather

information about social and cultural behavioral changes. Her methodology included distribution of 5,000 surveys by mail and direct handouts at community gatherings and Indian shopping centers in a five month period between 1992 and 1993 (2000:100). The survey questions were divided into separate categories, to indicate the “level of assimilation in a particular dimension of an immigrant’s life” (2000:100). She notes that the “survey analysis highlights differences based on gender, income, and length of stay, but also emphasizes similarities” as well (2000:100). The response rate to the survey was slightly greater than 11% (2000:100). The mean age of male respondents was 45, and for women, the mean age was 42 (101).

Pertinent to this study are Rangaswamy’s (2000) findings regarding youth, women, and social practices related to marriage. She notes that in her sample, “a majority (71%) of the respondents approved of arranged marriages” (2000:120). Regarding attitudes about marrying an American, 35% of Indians disapproved of this, while 36% were neutral and 20% approved. As to dating, Rangaswamy states that parents “tend to permit group dating as a way to allow their children to develop social skills, but frown upon it as a ‘spouse hunting’ exercise, since they still believe in the advantages of arranged marriages” (2000:121). Her survey results about attitudes toward children dating an American indicate that 35% are neutral, while 30% disapprove and 24% approve. Rangaswamy does not provide any results about dating other Indians, but does point out that typically immigrants have been bound to endogamy. She notes that Indian parents traditionally have not allowed dating, fearing that it leads to premarital sex, and so they “are afraid to let their children loose in such an environment” (2000:121). However, she also states that children, “especially those of high school age, are straining at the leash

and are likely to make their own decisions” regarding dating and future marriage (2000:121).

Like Shankar, Rangaswamy indicates that most Indian-American teens date, but do so “in secret and over the objections of their parents” (2000:182). Regarding marriage and the issue of choice, Rangaswamy states that the second generation of Indian-Americans “appears to be working towards building a middle ground, with more of its members anticipating that they will probably marry another Indian, perhaps someone their parents might introduce them to, but definitely someone they themselves would be comfortable with” (2000:182). It appears that the “ultimate choice will be their own, but their parents’ views will be taken into consideration” (2000:182). Similar to youth in this dissertation, her participants expressed frustration about parental pressure on the issues of dating and arranged marriages, but also were “open to the idea of family involvement in the selection of a spouse” as long as they were given freedom to make their own final decision (2000:182).

Related Studies with Young Adults in India

In an attempt to map the dynamics of change in the world of youth in India, DeSouza, Kumar and Shastri (2009) report on the first nationwide study in India that investigates youths’ attitudes and future aspirations about a range of topics including globalization, development, modernity, employment, lifestyle, family and social networks. The study was commissioned in 2007 by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Foundation through the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (2009:xii). The main purposes of the study were to examine if and how Indian youths’ views diverged from perspectives of youth elsewhere in the world; to gather information for future policy planning, and to contribute

to academic studies regarding singular or multiple routes to engaging with modernity (2009:xv).

The multi-method study included surveys and structured interviews. The sample for the youth survey was drawn by utilizing a multi-stage systematic random sampling technique (2009:113). The total target sample of 5,000 respondents between the ages of 14 – 34 years of age was distributed in different states in proportion to their share of the youth population (2009:113). The age of youth in India is officially recognized by the government to include all those in the age group of 14 to 34 (2009:xvi). Survey results were divided into seven categories.

In the category of family and social networks, there was “no clear disjuncture between youth and their parents, with varying levels of acceptance of parental authority in areas as diverse as career and marriage” (2009:xxii). There was “very strong endorsement of the family as an important institution by the youth” and nearly “nine out of every ten youth felt that to be happy, one needed a family” (2009:26). Furthermore, 65% of youth accepted that final decisions regarding their marriage should be taken by parents, and 67% of youth felt that marriages should take place within one’s caste community (2009:139-140). On the topic of divorce, 75% youth felt that once married, a couple must stay together, even if compromise was required (2009:140).

One of many interesting aspects of this study is recognition of the relationship of youth to modernity. These authors note that “if youth in the West are generally regarded as the flag-bearers of modernity, in India too they seem to have evolved a bicultural identity having elements of both local identity and global identity” (2009:xxviii). They explain that the quantitative results point to the conclusion that “Indian youth are not

following an alternative route to modernity,” and that differences in attitudes seem to be a function of “material and cognitive opportunity” rather than choice (2009:xxvii). Hence, if an opportunity presents itself, then Indian youth are “brought back in step with global trends” (2009:xxvii). The authors provide snapshots of case studies and snippets of brief articles related to topics in each category, but they do not include actual commentary by study participants, which might add greater depth to the findings that are presented.

Another glimpse of rapid changes in India is presented by Anand Giridharadas (2011), who offers keen observations of modern dynamics that are transforming India and its traditional values, which he describes as “abstractions meant to suffuse our being” (2011:2). Giridharadas provides rich details of his encounters of a “new” India, which he discovered while visiting the country (2011:10). His vivid descriptions of daily life, ambition, social practices and desires for upward mobility are fused with recollections of his parents’ emigration in the 1970s, and his own childhood memories of the India that was described to him, but only now fully experienced through his travels. He notes that the deepest change he witnessed was “in the mind, in how people conceived of their possibilities: Indians now seemed to know that they didn’t have to leave . . . to have their personal revolutions” (2011:24).

He continued that “the very fabric of Indianness . . . was slowly, gently unraveling” by the force of the dreams of youth, and “allowing itself to be woven in new ways” (2011:26). Throughout the chapters that are titled by singular words conveying deep emotions, such as love, anger, pride and freedom, Giridharadas discusses fundamental changes in a culture that was once full of “external restraints,” such as the collectivist mindset of family being involved in every personal decision (2011:147). He states that

Indians now “shared a new belief in the power of self-contained individuals,” which is changing the idea of what it means to be Indian both personally and nationally (2011:147). Throughout the narratives, Giridharadas illustrates the sway towards globalization that is vibrating through the intricacies of contemporary life on the continent, and he discusses some of the distinctive challenges that arise when traditional culture clashes with desires for more modern modes of thinking.

In an ethnographic analysis of information technology (IT) workers in major technical centers of Mumbai and Bangalore in India, and in Santa Clara and the Silicon Valley in California, Smitha Radhakrishnan (2011) discusses shifts in the notion of Indianness that result from a new class of transnational professionals who are driving economic, social and cultural changes. She introduces the concept of “cultural streamlining” as a process in which “IT professionals transform diverse practices constituting ‘Indian culture’ into appropriate difference – a generic, transferable set of ‘Indian’ cultural norms that are palatable to Western cosmopolitan culture” (2011:10). In addition to discussing the rapid rise of the IT industry in India and its impact on the global economy as well as personal social and cultural capital, this scholar also focuses upon the lifestyle of professional women, whom she claims must create a “respectable femininity” (2011:147). This requires women to balance the “desire and motivations of the individual with the duties and obligations of the family” (2011:147). This must be done in order to “produce a notion of Indianness that draws upon older notions of a sacred, feminized domestic sphere while also engaging in the progress of economic and social development” (2011:147).

Radhakrishnan delves into perceptions of individualism created through an industry which fosters independence, personal development and self-actualization (2011:120). She notes that “notions of individuality adopted from the workplace provide these professionals with the tools to refashion and reinvent the ways in which class, gender, and family constitute their backgrounds” (2011:120). This in turn impacts how IT women navigate parental and societal pressures to marry by their mid-20s, as well as how they reconcile their desires for financial and social independence.

In a study of Indo-Canadian youth, Nancy Netting (2006) examined how they negotiate between the dichotomous arranged and love marriage models, and how their decisions are precipitating cultural change. She posits that “in real life, there is no clear line between an arranged and a love marriage, as they exist in many combinations and degrees” (2006:131). This scholar indicates that her study participants (who were in their mid-20s and approaching marriage), exhibited “emotional intensity and ambivalence associated with questions of love and marriage” (2006:131). As they responded to the suggestion of family introductions to potential mates, Netting stated that respondents “fell into three distinguishable categories” (2006:136).

The typologies Netting identified include the “traditionalists,” who accept the conventional introduction system even though they had reservations; the “rebels,” who plan to choose their own partners and not be dissuaded by negative parental reaction, and the “negotiators,” who “hoped to find their own partners, but also to gain their parents’ consent and support” through the use of several strategies (2006:138). Netting also pointed out that about half of the “negotiators” would accept an introduced marriage if they didn’t succeed in finding a partner themselves because this position would “buy

time” as well as “provide insurance against being alone and feeling desperate” (2006:138). Netting’s findings regarding intergenerational conflicts over dating and marital decisions affirm those found by Dasgupta (1998), Gupta (1999b), Rangaswamy (2000) and Talbani and Hasanali (2000), all of whom concur with the continuing contentiousness that surrounds these issues.

Challenges in Adolescence and Early Adulthood

In framing a study about Indian-American youth, it is important to examine the contexts of the youth culture in which they operate. The scholars noted in this section have studied youth extensively, and offer their views on generational characteristics which are helpful in understanding the conditions in which today’s youth thrive and survive. These examinations of youths’ beliefs, interests, behaviors and burdens provide insights that may be useful in understanding how Indian-American youths construct their attitudes about maintaining arranged marriage traditions.

In Indian culture, there is an expectation that most young adults will marry after completing formal education, usually in their early to mid 20s, and definitely before the age of 30 (Jain 2008; Gupta 1999b; Leonard 1999). There is concern that the pool of suitable marriage prospects will diminish with age (Jain 2008; Gupta 1999b; Leonard 1999). Furthermore as Gupta states, “Regardless of their chronological age, young South Asians are usually not considered adults until they are married” (1999b:120). I have been personally privy on several occasions to the pressure that young Indian women feel to become quickly involved in the mate selection process as soon as formal schooling ends. Often they feel that there is no time to adjust between phases of life, or to have any time for self-reflection or exploration of the possibilities that await them. This is especially

problematic for those who wish to extend formal schooling or start demanding careers, and hence, to delay marriage.

However, Jeffrey Arnett (2015) recognizes that young adults in America today often define the criteria for adulthood differently than their parents' generation did, and his work provides a thorough background for understanding the period of life between adolescence and adulthood. His research, based on over 300 interviews with adolescents and young adults of diverse backgrounds, led him to suggest that the years between 18 and 25 mark a distinct period of psychological and social transition (2015:7). Arnett calls this period "emerging adulthood," and states that this period can extend to age 29, because the "end of it is highly variable" (2015:7). He notes that "today's emerging adults have unprecedented freedom," although "not all of them have an equal portion of it," basically because they are not as constricted by gender roles or economics, which in the past may have prevented a period of exploration between the late teens and twenties (2015:7).

Arnett characterizes the period of emerging adulthood as a new life stage between adolescence and adulthood when individuals can be particularly self-focused (2015:13). This is a time when young people can concentrate on essential developmental progress in making independent decisions, forging ahead in a career, and becoming financially stable prior to making enduring commitments to marriage and/or parenthood. He notes that the "the norms for what is considered the 'right' age to marry have weakened," and "young people can marry in their early twenties, their mid-twenties, their late twenties, or their early thirties and still be considered 'normal'" (2015:117). However, Arnett also emphasizes that "emerging adulthood exists today mainly in the 'developed countries' of

the West,” and clarifies that “one reflection of this is in the timing of marriage across countries” (2015:24). He explains that emerging adulthood “is a characteristic of cultures rather than countries” (2015:25), and it is important to differentiate reasons why ages at time of marriage can vary considerably from one culture to another.

Arnett posits that there are five distinct features of emerging adulthood in the United States: “1) identity explorations; 2) instability in love, work and place of residence; 3) self-focus; 4) feeling in-between, in transition, as neither adolescent nor adult, and 5) possibilities/optimism, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives” (2015:9). These phases of developmental transition provide meaningful contexts for evaluating progress towards goals and aspirations. As opportunities for personal and professional growth expand for young adults, and as the meaning of adulthood evolves as Arnett suggests, additional years of self-discovery may merit both encouragement and justification. However for Indian-American youth, engagement in self-discovery for an extended time may not meet with parental approval particularly if it delays marriage. Parents may challenge the worth of taking an extended time to explore a variety of career or relationship options because the concept is not familiar to them, and also because it interferes in expectations for specific life trajectories for their children.

In another study of today’s American youth, Jean Twenge (2014) has documented changes she has observed in the Millennial generation, or what she terms “Generation Me” or the “iGeneration,” because of the amount of self-focus that characterizes youth born in the 80s and 90s (2014:5). She notes that the ‘i’ has a double meaning in that it can stand for “Internet” since this generation is more electronically connected than any previous generation, or it can mean ‘individual’ to refer to the hyper-individualism that

has been encouraged by “growing up in an era when focusing on yourself was not just tolerated but actively encouraged” (2014:5). Twenge’s research features data from “more than 30 studies on generational differences, based on data from 11 million young Americans” (2014:4). She concludes that this generation is more confident, assertive, tolerant and ambitious, but also more entitled, angry and miserable than other generations, even though they “enjoy unprecedented freedom to pursue what makes them happy, and to look past traditional distinctions based on race, gender, and sexual orientation” (2014:9).

Twenge contends that the disgruntled discomfort that GenMe feels is based on the fact that they “are entering adulthood at a time when just getting by is increasingly difficult” (2014:318). She explains that the “collision of youthful expectation” with “the harsh adult reality” of coming of age during difficult economic times when good jobs may be scarce, and education, housing and living expenses are high, contribute to their unhappiness (2014:318). They “are angry that the optimistic mantras of their childhood have not prepared them for the real world” (2014:318). Twenge also notes that the focus of her book is on changes among young Americans, and on “trends that have arrived at different times, or not at all in many other cultures” (2014:10). She cautions that “the more exposure kids get to American culture, the more they will rebel against the family-first group-oriented ethos of many cultures around the world” (2014:10).

Similar to Arnett, Twenge addresses issues of relationships and sex, education and career, and relationships with parents. At the end of her volume, she offers pragmatic advice to both parents and young adults about how to overcome unrealistic expectations

resulting from excessive obsession with self-esteem, and how to adapt to the challenges of an ever changing world.

Taking more time to self-explore in early adulthood is by nature an individualistic pursuit, and one that is not necessarily congruent with expectations of more traditional, collectivist oriented societies, according to Twenge (2014:10). However, Arnett (2015) argues that time for self-focus is not necessarily only an individualistic pursuit, but one that may reap benefits not only for self but for others as well. He views it not as selfish indulgence, but rather a time to have the freedom to be self-directed, with fewer social rules and obligations (2015:14). These possibilities present interesting points of reference for Indian-American youth as they come of age and prepare to make important life choices.

Romance

The development of romantic relationships is a significant marker in the lives of adolescents, and certainly may contribute to ways in which Indian-American youth begin to construct their opinions about future marriage. Furman, Brown and Feiring (1999) have edited the first volume of research that focuses solely on adolescent romantic relationships. Contributors discuss their conceptualizations of these unique relationships, with emphasis upon a full range of aspects of romantic relationships, including emotional and cognitive processes and individual differences within the context of adolescent development. They also examine a variety of social contexts of adolescent romantic relationships, including the roles and influences of parents, friends and peers, as well as cultural variations in adolescent love relationships.

Of particular interest in this volume is the paper by Miller and Benson (1999) on romance and sex. These authors note that “for the establishment of long-term sexual or marital relationships, romantic attraction is the cultural imperative in North America” (1999:103). In contrast, they add that in traditional cultures, unions are arranged “between partners who might subsequently develop a romantic attachment for one another” (1999:103). The adoption of western cultural romantic ideals is an area of investigation in this study, and as they point out, “in western society, romantic love has taken on a culture of its own in which the seeking for and the attainment of romance becomes an expected part of pairing, if not an end in itself” (1999:104).

Also in this collection, Diamond, Savin-Williams and Dubé (1999) discuss numerous motivations for adolescent engagement in romance, as well as the characteristics and functions of these relationships. They state that “most adolescents desire romantic relationships and anticipate participating in them” (1999:199). However, they also raise questions regarding the occurrence of both heterosexual encounters and sexual-minority relationships which also are of interest to this study, given the taboos that surround these in Indian culture.

Dating, Marriage and Alternate Lifestyles

Navigating the landscapes of love can be quite a difficult road to travel for Indian-American youth, depending upon how they approach the topics of dating and marriage with parents, and what the family expectations are for following cultural traditions. The complexities of attitudes may be subtle or overt, and conflicts may arise if youth attempt to push the boundaries of behavior that are expected of them. Resistance to restrictions on dating in an era where globalization and technology have erased obstacles to

availability of potential partners also can cause contentious struggles within families.

The risks of family disapproval, the importance of conformity to traditional practices and values, and the desires to assert personal agency in making choices about who might be worthy of love and commitment converge when Indian-American young adults enter into the world of love and romance.

Dating as a Precursor to Marriage

In her collection of essays by and about South Asian women in America, Shamita Das Dasgupta (2002) presents several discussions about the challenges of clashes between patriarchal structures and women's resistance to their attendant pressures and restraints. Contributors focus upon forbidden topics of sexuality, intimacy and domestic violence, and they discuss possibilities for the renegotiation of identity and expectations among South Asian women. In one of the essays, the mother-daughter team of Indian scholars DasGupta and Das Dasgupta (2002) discuss protracted family conflict about maintaining traditional expectations of behavior and practices of arranged marriage, particularly between mothers and daughters. According to them, the task of inculcating second-generation Indian girls in their roles as "keepers of the culture consists of rejecting dating and accepting the traditional practice of arranged marriage by presenting the latter as essential to 'Indian' ways" (2002:113). These researchers assert that any move in the direction of dating or independent sexual choices is considered synonymous with Americanization and immoral behavior, and creates a dilemma of choosing between personal liberation and cultural loyalty (2002:113). Thus, expression of sexuality is a primary area of intergenerational conflict, and behavior of girls is monitored more closely than boys (DasGupta and Das Dasgupta 2002; Kashyap 2004).

According to Roy, one of the reasons that Indian adolescents, particularly girls, experience confusion, repression and emotional conflict about sexuality is because they receive mixed messages from their family, and information about sex that comes from family is often quite different from what is received from peers (2002:103). Though this may be similar for their American counterparts, Maira points out that second generation Indian-American females are “contained and judged” by standards of an “ethnically pure femininity,” and that it is particularly difficult for them to reject the sexualized “framework of gendered cultural authenticity” (2002:183).

Social Practices and Double Standards

Lowry and Misra (2007) and Khandelwal (2002) point out that marriage ensures a distinct status to women in Indian society, and it also places them in a subservient position to males. Gaping differences in treatment and expectations between the genders beginning at birth affect both major and minor decisions. Sons are allowed more freedom while daughters’ activities are more carefully monitored. They note that Indian-American females raised in the United States consider this a double standard, while their parents consider it a simple reflection of distinct gender roles, meant to socialize them more easily into later roles as wife and mother. Moral dimensions of power relations, social control and gender inequalities flow through these issues and provoke opposition between youth and their parents.

Adolescent concerns regarding strictness of parents and desiring to fit into American culture are discussed by Manohar (2008), Shankar (2008), Kallivayalil (2004), Maira (2002), Roy (2002), Khandelwal (2002), DasGupta (2002), Rangaswamy (2000), Gupta (1999a, 1999b) and Leonard (1997). Each of these scholars indicates that Indian-

American adolescents encounter some difficulties when trying to fit into typical mainstream teenage social life and activities. Conflicts between teens and their parents occur because of numerous codes of conduct, social rules, and systems of cultural control that surround them. These restraints are strong forces in lives of Indian-American adolescents, and they produce struggles in communication and expressions of feelings with both parents and peers (Manohar 2008; Shankar 2008; Kallivayalil 2004; Maira 2002; Roy 2002; Khandelwal 2002; DasGupta 2002; Rangaswamy 2000; Gupta 1999b; Leonard 1997).

An ambivalent loosening of parental reins regarding marriage traditions with immigrant Indian populations in the United States has been noted by Rangaswamy (2000), Kashyap (2004), and George (2006). These authors indicate that parents are acknowledging the need of young adults to have a more participatory role in mate selection, because adults have recognized that choice and love are important to their children in arranging a marriage. My study aims to extend the work of all of these scholars noted above by directly adding the voices of Indian-American youth and their parents, who are in the milieu of both cultures. As they process their perceptions, opinions and experiences related to premarital social life, Indian-American parents and youth are in a prime position to provide further insight into many of the issues that these scholars have begun to investigate.

Marriage as an Institution

Several scholars have observed that with numerous changes to the social fabric of modern western society, the functions and necessity of marriage have undergone dramatic change, leading people to question why they should marry at all, and what

benefits the institution will provide for them (Coontz 2005; Cherlin, 2004; Waite 1995). Stephanie Coontz (2005) traces marriage from the ancient world to modern times in her thorough history of the social transformations that shape the institution of marriage. She examines various social, cultural and political forces throughout several centuries which have influenced changes in the structure and customs of marriage, including arranged marriage practices.

Over the last four decades, striking changes in education and work opportunities for women, the increase and ease of divorce, the rise of cohabitation among unmarried partners, the high occurrence of unwed births, and the demand for same-sex unions have caused an explosive shift in attitudes and support for marriage in western societies, leading to what some have called the de-institutionalization of marriage (Blankenhorn 2007; Coontz 2005; Cherlin 2004; Browning 2003). Andrew Cherlin characterizes deinstitutionalization as a “weakening of the social norms that define people’s behavior in a social institution” (2004:848). He notes the increasing number and complexity of alternative living arrangements that have contributed to profound changes in marriage and family in America.

However, in Indian family life, marriage is still highly valued as an institution, and certainly necessary for bearing and raising children according to Indian scholar Pratiba Ghewalla (2004). Indian attorney Geetha Ravindra addresses the transformation of Indian marriages in the twenty-first century, noting that the viability and continuity of the Indian marriage and family is dependent upon the younger generation’s understanding of the purpose of Indian marriage traditions (2013:xiv). She asserts that youth must carefully consider which traditions, customs and values that they wish to retain

(2013:xiv). She also discusses challenges youth face in honoring and preserving the sanctity of marriage in the modern era.

Addressing the preservation of the institution of marriage particularly in South Asian culture, George and George (2010) developed a preparation guide that is geared toward serious discernment about commitment to marriage. Through their outreach with Indian-American youth, they became cognizant of the need for open discussion and counsel about practical matters in spouse selection, whether or not the match is arranged. Their book fills a gap in marriage education for the South Asian population by addressing sensitive matters related to choice, communication and sex. They include a Christian perspective as well as realistic advice regarding matters of potential conflict which threaten to weaken respect for the institution of marriage, as well as the bonds that hold spouses together.

In Indian families, children are exposed at an early age to respect for the social value of marriage in their households, communities and nation (Singh 2010). In discussing differences in children's understanding of the institution of marriage, Mazur (1993) notes that social and cultural scripts for attitudes toward marriage and divorce may be developed as early as middle childhood, depending upon parental role models and processes of socialization. She notes that children's receptivity to information transmitted by parents, friends, mass media and organized religion shape their thoughts and cultural beliefs about the institution of marriage. Indian-American youth may be presented with dichotomous cultural scripts about marriage which may affect their perceptions of marriage as an institution, and possibly influence their future choices.

Social Stigmas of Alternative Lifestyles: The Struggles to Be Single, Divorced or Gay

Living as a single person for a protracted period of time is not the norm in Indian society, and it is directly opposed to traditional Indian family life that is built around a nuclear family, as well as extended family members who also may reside in the household. However, both social scientist Bella DePaulo (2006) and sociologist Eric Klinenberg (2012) note a very significant demographic shift in the United States, which indicates that the rise in solo living is transforming American life. DePaulo (2006) cites demographic changes in the United States prior to Klinenberg's study. She states that at the time of her writing, there were "87 million Americans who were widowed, divorced or who had never married – more than 40% of the 18-year-old and older population" (2006:7). She agrees with Klinenberg (2012) that Americans spend more years of their adult lives being single than married. However, she bristles against the stigmas associated with prolonged singlehood as well as the stereotyping and marginalization of single women. She also debunks claims that marriage makes people far happier than they were as singles.

The term "singlism" is coined by DePaulo to mean the "stigmatizing of people who are single – whether divorced, widowed, or ever single – [it] is the twenty-first century problem that has no name" (2006:2). She discusses a hierarchical continuum of social attachment and commitment in which married people are supposed to be better off in every way than everyone else, followed by cohabiters, then those with a partner, and finally, those who are single without a partner (2006:5). DePaulo vigorously refutes this, and addresses myths of how and why marriage is supposed to be a better choice for everyone.

Through extensive research which included more than 300 interviews, Klinenberg reports that today there are more single than married American adults in the United States, and many of them are living on their own (2012:98). Klinenberg asserts that the “typical American will spend more of his or her adult life unmarried than married, and much of this time he or she will live alone” (2012:98). Klinenberg differentiates between living alone and being isolated, noting that people who live alone tend to spend more time in social contact with friends and neighbors than people who are married (2012:99). He notes that living alone is not an entirely solitary experience and in fact, it is generally quite a social one. Further, one of the reasons for the spike in numbers of solo dwellers is economic; people can afford to live alone due to wealth generated by economic development and social security (2012:180).

Klinenberg also mentions other factors that have contributed to the high number of singles, including the rising status of women, the revolution in communications, mass urbanization and the longevity revolution, all of which “created conditions in which the individual could flourish” (2012:228). As both Arnett (2015) and Twenge (2014) have noted, young adults have a lengthier time to explore solo living between the time that they finish schooling, and before they marry. However, these trends pointed out by Klinenberger (2012) may not meet with parental approval, as they have the potential to interfere with the traditional life trajectory that is expected of their offspring, which is to marry soon after completion of education.

The notion of exposing children to divorce and the risks related to growing up without both parents is unacceptable and alien to Indian culture, as are the ideas of unwed motherhood and alternative partnerships (Amato 1994). The emphases on

interdependency and family honor in Indian families are strong deterrents to family breakup and are integral to parenting practices (Kim and Wong 2002). In a landmark study of the legacy of divorce, Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000) explain the long-term effects of divorce, for which they garnered evidence over the course of a 25-year longitudinal study that began in 1971. These scholars unpack layers of feelings and emotional conflicts woven through stories which participants shared during initial interviews and every five years thereafter. Their findings indicate that the impact of divorce increases over time, and has the most compelling effect in adulthood, when children of divorced parents begin to form romantic attachments of their own (2000:298). In adulthood, divorce “affects personality, the ability to trust, expectations about relationships, and the ability to cope with change” (2000:298).

Wallerstein et al. express concern that the divorce culture which has evolved in the United States “has changed childhood itself,” citing the fact that “a million new children a year are added to our march of marital failure” (2000:296). Furthermore, they add that “children are voiceless or unheard” as families traverse the difficult path to breakup and redefinition (2000:296). In Indian-American families, it is expected that marriage will be a lifetime commitment. The occurrence of divorce is still quite uncommon for them, and the disruption of a marriage creates family stigma.

Same-sex relationships and homosexual marriage are mostly hidden in Indian culture. Same sex couples face much difficulty in India, and there has been scant discourse on homosexuality in Indian literature, with stories mostly untold (Vanita 2000). The stigma associated with homosexuality still remains particularly great, as it is antithetical to traditional marriage values. In 2013, India’s Supreme Court reinstated a 19th century law

that bans gay sex even though it was highly criticized from legal and human rights perspectives (Rao and Jacob 2014).

However in 2000, Ruth Vanita offered the first of her three works that illuminate the largely unexplored topics of same-sex love and eroticism in India. In her first volume, she chronicled the history of queer writing in India, and included a variety of topics from ancient writings to contemporary fiction. In a subsequent anthology, Vanita (2002) delves further into tracing the historical roots of homosexuality in Indian literature with the aim to dispel assumptions and stereotypes about gender, sexuality and daily life in South Asia. In her 2005 book, Vanita addresses same-sex weddings and suicides of same-sex couples in India within the context of the international debate on gay marriage. This is one of the first books to examine these topics in Indian literature, and Vanita (2005) further contextualizes her observations through both past and present Indian, European and American cultural representations of same-sex unions. Vanita points out that because of the high stigma of homosexuality, “large numbers of people live as apparently traditional heterosexuals, while secretly engaging in homosexual liaisons, or leading lives of quiet desperation” (2005:161). She adds that “the same is true in the West,” but it is “less often acknowledged because many people assume that the openly gay community is synonymous with the entire gay population,” which is not the case (2005:161).

Relevant Research on Autonomy and Choice

Questions regarding how Indian-American youth appraise situations and make choices, what they perceive as choice, and what level of personal agency may be employed in making choices related to premarital activity and sexuality are woven

throughout this study. Scholars have examined these issues from a variety of stances. Their observations provide rich and ample background information that serve as a springboard for elaboration within this dissertation.

The Autonomous Self within Individualistic and Collectivist Orientations

Agency is an important dimension in differentiating between various types of emotional experience according to Mesquita (2003). However, the extent to which agency is exercised varies among cultural models. The contrast between the western model of independence versus the Indian model of interdependence of an individual and his/her social environment is an area for examination within this study. Silverberg and Gondoli discussed work by Bellah (1985), and concluded that the process of becoming one's own person in American culture orients one toward an individualistic, independent stance because it involves separating from family, community and inherited ideas (1996:14).

However, as Fiske (2002) points out, socially constructed aspects of culture such as values, norms, goals and rules may overlap between one culture and another. How one places himself or herself as an autonomous person within the framework of both cultures can be quite variable. The lines between an individualistic versus collectivistic orientation may very well be blurred and more intricate than they appear on the surface, and not necessarily be mutually exclusive, as also has been noted by Smetana (2002).

Addressing varying degrees of autonomy within individualist and collective cultures, Smetana (2002) also points out that individuals in any culture can value autonomy, while at the same time attach significance to the importance of sustaining traditions and goals of the group. They can be "collectivist in some situations and individualistic in others,

and may seek the fulfillment of personal goals (although perhaps covertly) even while upholding society's demands for conformity" (2002:55). While adolescents' desire for autonomy may reflect the individualistic nature of American culture, conflicts which ensue from it are often "prototypical of the generative tension that characterizes relatedness in the United States and other Western cultures" with so much emphasis on individual and personal fulfillment (2002:61). Nonetheless, Smetana notes that adolescents attempt to adjust their beliefs about the "legitimacy of (culturally variable) social conventions and the validity of moral prescriptions" as they try to claim areas of personal control and self-regulation which are required to become an independent adult within their cultural milieu (2002:66).

Indian scholar Sheena Iyengar (2010) states that a defining feature of cultural variability in the practice of choice is the degree of individualism or collectivism that goes into it. She explains that those who are raised in more individualist societies are taught to "focus primarily on the 'I' when choosing," noting that "individualists . . . not only choose based on their own preferences, [but] they also come to see themselves as defined by their individual interests, personality traits and actions" (2010:31). Iyengar adds that this way of thinking is so ingrained that "we rarely pause to consider that it may not be a universally shared ideal" or that "some people may prefer to have their choices prescribed by another" (2010:32). Members of collectivist societies "see themselves primarily in terms of the groups to which they belong, such as family, coworkers, village or nation," and they are willing to prioritize collective goals over their own personal goals (2010:32). For them, the emphasis is on their connectedness to members of the

collectives, and they believe that “individuals can be happy only when the needs of the group as a whole are met” (2010:32).

In narratives of marriage, Iyengar succinctly portrays love marriages as a “fundamentally individualist endeavor” and arranged marriages as “quintessentially collectivist” (2010:36), though that distinction may not be universally true. She states that “each narrative of wedded bliss comes with its own set of expectations and its own measure of fulfillment” (2010:44). In an arranged marriage, Iyengar adds that marital happiness is “primarily gauged by the fulfillment of duties” and in a love marriage, “the major criterion is the intensity and duration of the emotional connection” between partners (2010:44). She notes that individuals in modern times “must interpret their past and dream their future as outcomes of choices made or choices still to make,” with the understanding that these cumulative choices “are the expression and enactment” of the “most treasured value of freedom” (2010:84).

In their study of marriage satisfaction in India and the United States, Myers, Madathil and Tingle (2005) compared partners in arranged marriages and marriages of choice. They examined questionnaires completed by 45 individuals living in arranged marriages in India, with existing data on individuals in the United States who were living in marriages of choice (2005:183). These scholars indicate that there was “no difference in marriage satisfaction between the participants in India living in arranged marriages and those in the United States living in marriages of choice,” suggesting that “regardless of factors considered important to marriage, satisfaction in one’s marriage relationship is not affected” (2005:187).

However, the authors also explain that the difference between individualist and collective orientations may be a factor, noting that “the findings concerning the greater importance of love and loyalty factors in U.S. marriages could be influenced by the fact that . . . individuals actively select mates, and therefore more thought is given to desired characteristics of a potential mate” (2005:187). In arranged marriage, the focus “is on accepting and adjusting to partners after marriage,” therefore, love is viewed differently by Indians, and “is not seen as a necessary precursor to marriage” (2005:187). Because of the “lack of significant differences in love wellness,” the authors suggest that “cultural values relative to love and marriage mitigate for satisfaction” regardless of whether the marriage results from family arrangement or personal choice (2005:187).

In later research, Madathil and Benshoff (2008), expanded upon the results of the previous study, noting that the cultural contexts of individualism and collectivism are essential frameworks for understanding marriage and the marital characteristics that are important in determining marital satisfaction. Comparing a much larger sample of Indians in arranged marriages living in the United States, Indians in arranged marriages living in India, and Americans in marriages of choice, they investigated four factors of marriage (loving, loyal, shared values, and finances) for each group (2008:224). They then examined correlations between the importance of these characteristics and levels of satisfaction for participants in each of the three groups (2008:224).

The results indicate significant differences between demographic groups, with the Indians in arranged marriages living in the United States reporting higher satisfaction than those in the other two groups (2008:227). Furthermore, the United States based Indians in arranged marriages “reported being significantly more satisfied with their

marriages overall than participants in the other groups” (2008:228). The authors note that this may be due to enjoying the stability of an arranged marriage while also living in American culture that “imposes fewer constraints on them than they might experience at home in India” (2008:228). They also indicate the importance of mindfulness regarding “assumptions through which the customs and practices of other cultures are viewed” (2008:228). These findings suggest that satisfaction in arranged marriages is quite achievable for couples who live in western societies, and they provide interesting points of reference for bicultural youth who may question the relevance of the custom in their own lives.

Adding to recent comparative studies of young adults in India and America regarding marital life, Benjanyan, Marshall and Ferenczi tested whether “gender role ideology and collectivism mediated the associations of culture with romantic beliefs, mate preferences and future difficulties in marital life” (2014:6). More than 200 unmarried participants with a mean age of 25, completed a variety of scales to measure attitudes towards sex roles, collectivism, romantic beliefs, essential characteristics for mates, and anticipated future difficulties in marriage (2014:4-5). Not surprisingly, they found that Indians reported greater collectivism and more traditional mate preferences; they also discovered that Indians had higher anticipation of future difficulties in marriage (2014:7). Indians also endorsed a more traditional gender role ideology (2014:7).

However, Indians also reported more romantic beliefs in this study, which was not anticipated. The scholars note that although love may not be the primary selection criteria for a partner in collectivist cultures, this “does not necessarily dispel the desire for it” (2014:7). They explain that in Indian classic folklore and modern Bollywood movies,

romantic love is revered in epic love stories and also denounced for its potential to be destructive (2014:7). Nonetheless, while collectivist values emphasize more practicality in mate selection and relationship maintenance, individual “idealistic views on love and romance may be strongly supported within the cultural milieu” (2014:7).

Adolescent Autonomy

The push for autonomy from parents has been studied by several scholars. Areas of inquiry include defining areas of adolescent personal jurisdiction, determining what and how much information adolescents disclose to parents, and influences of peers regarding personal freedom. Daddis indicates that adolescents of varying ethnicities in the United States attempt to “redefine and renegotiate what they consider to be within the bounds of their own legitimate authority” (2008a:1032). He notes that adolescents and their close friends are often similar in their judgments and justifications about what they believe should be their choice. Citing Smetana (1988; 2000; 2002) and Smetana & Asquith (1994), Daddis (2008a) notes that these researchers focused primarily on identifying issues and behaviors that adolescents consider to be private matters of choice, rather than matters of right or wrong. It seems that when issues affect the self and do not involve harm of any kind, adolescents view them to be within their own jurisdiction, and beyond justifiable parental regulation.

Also of interest is Daddis’ finding that adolescents’ friends are important sources of advice, and are valuable metrics to gauge their own construction of beliefs about personal authority over their social world and levels of parental control and freedom (2008b:90). Friends also influence the extent to which adolescents voluntarily disclose information to parents about romantic involvement (2008b:92).

Netting (2010) indicates that in challenging the customs of arranged marriage in India, upper middle class youth are moving beyond the conventional dichotomy of love versus arranged marriage. Instead they are focusing upon achieving specific goals of personal choice, equality and intimacy (2010:718-719). In order to achieve these goals, Netting states that youth are crafting new ways to assert their autonomy and negotiate with parents by developing hybrid systems of arranged marriage. These include the “self-arranged marriage,” during which two friends make a practical decision to become partners, and the prospective bride and groom present one another to their parents for acceptance (2010:720). Another hybrid system is the “love-cum-arranged marriage,” in which a couple meet, fall in love, make a commitment, and then approach parents to ask permission to marry (2010:721). In both scenarios, youth are consciously asserting their right to choose, but at the same time, constructing new paradigms through negotiation with parents and recognition of individual wishes and goals for their marriages.

Adolescents' Disclosure of Information and Sense of Personal Jurisdiction

Daddis and Randolph (2010) found that teens are more likely to discuss romantic and dating matters with peers rather than parents, citing that it is a private aspect of their lives and matter of personal choice to discuss it or not, rather than an issue of right or wrong over which parents would have authority. However they also point out that romantic involvement is a “multifaceted issue” which “contains concerns that fall under both parent and adolescent jurisdiction of authority” (2010:310). Smetana and Asquith (1994) agree with the multifaceted nature of adolescent issues, which arise from dating, friendships and risk-taking behaviors, and the associated effect these matters have on

parent-child relationships. The term “multifaceted” refers to issues which include both personal and conventional components (1994:1147). These scholars conducted an in-depth examination of the “boundaries between legitimate parental authority and adolescents’ personal jurisdiction,” as well as the “consequences of discrepancies between parents’ and adolescents’ conceptions of authority for adolescent-parent conflict” (1994:1148). They found that adolescents distinguish between parents’ authority to regulate moral, prudential and conventional issues, and their own authority to regulate personal issues, which were judged to be justifiably controlled by themselves. Additionally they point out that families were more restrictive about personal issues with girls than with boys.

Adolescents’ active management of information about their lives and levels of disclosure about issues deemed as personal also were addressed by Smetana, Metzger, Gettman and Campione Barr (2006). These scholars claim that there are increasing opportunities for adolescents to keep things secret, to manage information and to make choices about disclosure, as they spend more time outside the home. Additionally, they direct attention to the need for more research to examine secrecy and disclosure among different ethnic groups, noting that these terms “may have different meanings in different cultural contexts” (2006:214).

Similarly, Mounts and Kim noted that parents often may not be aware of their children’s initial ventures into dating, and because adolescents view dating as a personal domain, they will minimize reporting of their activity (2009:552). Results of a study conducted by Jensen, Arnett, Feldman and Cauffman (2004) indicate that both high school and college students feel justified in lying to parents when they feel their rights to

make decisions independent of parental influence are violated. These authors found that the tendency to lie is not universal, but associated with age, sex, developmental level and family environment (2004:111).

Studies by Updegraff, McHale, Crouter and Kupanoff (2001) and Waizenhofer, Buchanan and Jackson-Newsom (2004) indicate that mothers are more knowledgeable about adolescent peer relations and daily activities, and they seem to both acquire and give information more easily to their spouses about daughters, indicating a skew toward more control of females.

Both Kallivayalil (2004) and Manohar (2008) explore the navigation of gender and cultural socialization with Indian-American youth, and spotlight their difficulties with parental resistance to western dating practices. Kallivayalil states that female participants in her study who “did engage in dating, had developed elaborate modes of secrecy” as a means to protect both themselves and their parents from unwanted gossip and judgment in their communities (2004:548). They understood the importance of maintaining “a culturally consistent and respectable front” (2004:548). Manohar concurs, and points out that due to gender structures within the Indian-American community, youth have devised specific strategies in their dating behaviors which include extensive secrecy, lying, and using specific semantics of dating, also with the goals of avoiding unfavorable judgment and circumventing conflict (2008:583).

Moral Dimension of Social Responsibility

Pertinent scholarship on perceptions of choice and social responsibility include three different studies comparing and contrasting Indians and Americans. Miller, Bersoff and Harwood (1990) indicate that cultural variations exist in the range of social

responsibilities considered as moral, and in the criteria used in judging these as moral obligations. They note that “cultural meaning systems influence the development of moral codes” (1990:41). Additionally they point out that Indian subjects had a much broader view of interpersonal duties than Americans, who were more ambivalent, more conflicted about freedom of choice, and considered a “smaller domain of social responsibilities as moral obligations” (1990:45). Indians on the other hand, considered social responsibilities as “fundamental obligations inherent in all interpersonal relationships” (1990:45). Whether or not Indian-American youth or their parents view following arranged marriage traditions as a social responsibility or a moral obligation to abide may be revealed in this study. Generational differences between senses of responsibility and obligation also may surface and indicate areas for additional research.

In agreement with Miller et al. (1990), Savani, Markus, Naidu, Kumar and Berlia state that whether people view specific actions as choices depends upon their “sociocultural systems of meanings and practices” (2010:391). Further, they note that for Indians, personal choice may be a less important category of action because it “does not serve the socio-cultural imperative of being responsive to social roles and situations” (2010:392). In the view of these authors, the perceived benefits of maximum availability of personal choice may not be universal, but instead be limited to North American contexts.

Iyengar extends the discussion of the social and moral benefits and consequences of choice, which she calls the “lingua franca” of America (2010:xii). She describes the expansion of choice as becoming an “explosion of choice,” which can render one feeling beset and paralyzed rather than satisfied and excited by having to make choices among so many possibilities in nearly every facet of life (2010:188). Mundane choices and life-

altering choices are made every day, and are driven by powerful internal and external forces of influence which are negotiated in daily life, and affect every dimension of life. Iyengar states that “choosing helps us create our lives. We make choices and are in turn made by them” (2010:268). This is a simple yet profound observation that appears on the surface to be universally true, but it is also necessary to consider the cultural layers of meaning involved in choosing.

The work of all of these scholars on various aspects of choice lends a core dimension to this study. Fundamental notions of choice as expressed by Indian-Americans will provide essential groundwork to determine how traditions of arranged marriage are adapted in their lives.

Moral Frameworks of Development

Addressing issues of development and presentation of the moral self that influence autonomy in more collectivist South Asian societies, Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller argue that the “social communication theory of moral development” affirms the ways in which a culture’s ideology and view of the world affect the development and maturation of children’s moral understandings (1990:195). They argue that cultural and moral interpretations toward events and cultural-specific moral codes are conveyed to children in the context of routine social life by “local guardians of the moral order” such as parents, and produce conformity to obligations, hierarchy and maintenance of social harmony (1990:197).

In contrast, Helwig (2006) contends that views regarding conceptions of self within a moral framework do not necessarily have to be cast into specific dimensions of individualistic or collective orientations of culture. He argues that autonomy involves

“universal psychological needs pertaining to agency and identity formation, expressed in different ways over different developmental periods” (2006:460). Helwig suggests that examination of conceptions of the moral and autonomous self take place within a broader framework of cultural contexts to reflect a more universal construction of the personal domain of autonomy. Evidence reviewed in his study indicates that there are many similarities across diverse cultures in the developmental pathway toward autonomy that “are only beginning to be recognized and systematically investigated” (2006:458). He notes that there are “universal patterns seen in adolescents’ judgments of their own autonomy, and the discrepancy between these judgments and the practices and views of their parents” (2006:465).

Through this dissertation, I provide information about Indian-American youths’ conceptions of self and their position within the moral framework of their bifurcated culture as they perceive it. This is important especially in relation to their sense of freedom to make choices regarding social activity leading to eventual marriage, and regarding marriage traditions to which they are expected to adhere.

Relevant Research on Emotional Expression

Indian-American youth often encounter sensitive matters related to gender stereotypes, self-identity, choice and disclosure, which can produce conflicting emotions as they navigate through adolescence and early adulthood. The genuine expression of their emotions may be hindered by concern about parental approval, or maintaining a façade of compliance, or perhaps, personal inner turmoil related to a specific issue. This study touches briefly on Indian-American youths’ emotional expression related to areas of contention that are common in their social worlds. The following citations of research highlight some of the issues that are important to this study.

Gender and Equality

Shankar states that in the immigrant community, “being a successful community member is premised on particular gendered performances in social life, dating and marriage” (2008:169). Females in particular are challenged to maintain self-esteem and social functioning as well as to conform to traditional rules, roles, customs and values. To do otherwise risks the possibility of becoming a cultural misfit according to Viswanthan, Shah and Ahad (1997).

The social construction of emotional life for Indian-American adolescents with respect to their sexuality, identity formation and preparation for expected arranged marriage is discussed by Khandelwal (2002), Roy (2002), Maira (2002) and Shankar (2008). These scholars indicate that Indian-American youth commonly experience emotional conflicts over issues of parental control, oppression and protection, as well as issues of respect, authority, family obligations and familial loyalty. Farver, Bhadha and Narang state that in Asian-Indian immigrant families, “traditional attitudes toward gender-typed behavior may be intensified by parental concern for the relatively permissive attitudes held towards adolescent girls in Western societies,” and consequently, parents monitor daughters more closely than sons (2002:13).

Identity Formation

Farver et al. further indicate that Indian-American adolescents are challenged to create a sense of self amid competing and conflicting cultural allegiances, resulting in potential refusal to choose between being “*either American or Asian Indian*” (emphasis in original) (2002:15). This in turn may lead them to attempt to create a definition of self based on their own terms, rather than on their parents’ acculturation style or preferred

ethnic identity. These identity issues can produce reactions which contribute to adolescents' emotional upheavals.

However, as Maira states, "visits to India and transnational family relationships, while catalytic, can both support and challenge second generation Indian-Americans' sense of ethnic identification" (2002:116). She indicates that Indian-American youth may indeed feel conflicted by attempting to define a distinct identity because in India, they are often categorized as American (2002:115). Maira (2002) further adds that Indian immigrant parents may uphold a dated and sometimes idealized vision of the India they left behind, and that their children are occasionally surprised to experience culture in India that has significantly changed due to globalization, and no longer epitomizes Indian tradition as it may have been described to them. In this regard, confusion and paradox result for Indian-American youth, who may struggle with not only typical adolescent identity issues, but also with cultural identity issues as well.

Roy (2002) also indicates that emotional struggles of Indian youth are compounded by concern for the collective opinion of others, should there be a digression from what is culturally acceptable, more particularly for females and reflecting a double standard of behavior. Roy points out that "unlike the Indian identity, which gathers its strength and validity from the approval of family and community, a child in the West is very much under the influence of her immediate peers, at least in her adolescence" (2002:102). This research investigates these struggles and Indian-American youths' expression of emotion in this regard.

Shaping, Doing and Managing Emotion

Stephanie Shields (2002) describes how culturally shared beliefs about emotion shape

masculine and feminine identities and behavioral boundaries. She also provides insight regarding how stereotypical beliefs about gendered emotion reveal the ways in which gender is negotiated in and through relationships. She further notes that gender and emotion are “linked through ideas about women’s and men’s capacities for *management* (emphasis in original) of their emotion,” as well as their abilities to perform gender and do emotion (2002:54). Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2003) draws on the work of Erving Goffman, and discusses the emotional labor⁸ involved in managing emotions. She also notes significant gender differences regarding emotion, stating that females are better emotional managers, but they also are expected to defer more and more often, thus creating an imbalance of power between the sexes (2003:168). Hochschild describes strategies of surface and deep acting to manage feelings and navigate display rules, which have the potential to create emotional dissonance and estrangement from true feelings (2003:90). This dynamic is one that I examine in both interviews and observations of Indian-American family members.

Emotional Labor and Ensuing Struggles

It appears that Indian-American youth are positioned to experience emotional conflict and dissonance on many levels. It seems that extensive engagement in emotional labor may be required at times to maintain face and image while trying to navigate contradictory standards of behavior between both cultures. It also seems necessary for Indian-American youth to follow display rules and respond to cultural signals to honor their family expectations of behavior. Further, they may feel obligated to project the

⁸ Term coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild to describe a type of emotional regulation and management which creates a visible display of facial and bodily expression that is publicly acceptable within a given context.

image of conducting themselves in a socially acceptable way that is congruent with goals that are set for them, particularly the goal of arranged marriage. Taken together, all of these factors indeed may cause conflicts and emotional struggles.

Similarly Indian-American parents may experience both emotional conflict and dissonance as they struggle to raise their offspring between two cultures, while trying to maintain not only their image, but that of the larger, tradition laden, collective family and community identity of which they are a part. Discussions of sexuality, dating and marriage likely can raise issues that disrupt this traditional image.

Along these lines, it seems that emotional conflicts can manifest in any number of complex ways for both youth and adults. They are challenged daily with navigating between competing Indian and American cultural expectations amid the wide variety of social choices that are ever present in daily life. They also are continually negotiating the expression of their bicultural identities in daily functioning as well as in major decisions in their lives. These areas present interesting possibilities for further exploration within this population regarding the expression and interpretation of emotion and emotional conflict.

Additional Cultural Considerations and Sensitivities

Other scholars have addressed the social construction of emotion and issues of culture and emotional expression, with emphasis upon the degree to which culture matters in how people name and express their emotions. McCarthy (1994) points out that it is important to understand how culture matters within emotional expression because feelings are one of the principal bases for self-validation. McCarthy also postulates that emotions are linked with many elements of social and cultural phenomena including

vocabularies of emotion, rules governing expression, and cultural patterns of interactional processes. Anthropologists Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) and Rosaldo (1984) offer several views on the social-cultural aspects of emotion, which challenge traditional Western traditions and concepts of emotions. As Rosaldo summarized, culture makes a significant difference in the lives of human beings “that concerns not simply what we think but how we feel about and live our lives” (1984:140.)

By delving into the window of emotions and emotional expression in this study, I expect to obtain valuable information about how Indian-American youth and their parents conduct and manage their emotions with one another. Furthermore, I aim to understand how their management of emotions contributes to the maintenance or deconstruction of an image congruent with Indian culture.

Much of the scholarly literature on second generation Indian-American youth focuses upon theory about generational conflicts and cultural clashes which arise from differences of opinion, particularly about dating, marriage, and maintenance of traditional Indian family values. This study attempts to build upon existing research in these areas, and to deepen understanding of the actual lived experiences of Indian-American youth, by spotlighting their voices and those of Indian-American parents as well. In this way, I hope to extend knowledge about how these youth are negotiating and transforming the arranged marriage traditions that have been in their families for generations.

Chapter Two: Research Design and Methods

The goal of this research is to gain an understanding of the viewpoints of both Indian-American youth and parents regarding their expectations of arranged marriage, and to acquire insight into what factors may influence their attitudes and positions. As the current generation of Indian-American teens and young adults grows to maturity, it is their attitudes and feelings that likely will be most influential in determining the future of arranged marriage practices in the United States. The tradition of arranged marriage in Indian culture has been maintained in both India and the United States, even with the rapidity of social change, coupled with extensive variations in Indian-American backgrounds (such as state of Indian origin, language, religion, caste, socio-economic status and education levels). Because marriage is a fundamental life decision, it is important to examine the custom of arranged marriage more closely, and to interrogate the people who have lived through and with experiences of the tradition.

In order to obtain a broad picture of what is currently happening in the Indian-American community regarding the tradition of arranged marriage, I used a multi-method investigation for this study. It appeared from the paucity of information on this topic that I was in uncharted waters, because I found little in the way of previous research that thoroughly addressed this topic, particularly from the viewpoint of youth. Furthermore, the topic of arranged marriage does not occur in a vacuum; there are several other social, emotional and cultural undercurrents which filter into the question of whether or not arranged marriage still is relevant to and practiced among the Indian-American population. These include attitudes about dating, romantic love, autonomy, choice, and alternative lifestyles, all of which may contribute to the formation of beliefs, biases,

stances and sentiments about arranged marriage.

Therefore, to gain specific information about attitudes and the variety of undercurrents which form viewpoints about arranged marriage from the perspectives of both youth and adults, I employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in this research. By using a combined methodology, a thorough analysis of the opinions of Indian-American youth and adults regarding the confluence of influences that shape their perception and negotiation of arranged marriage traditions could be obtained.

Research Questions

Through field work and analysis of the collected data, answers to the following broad research questions were expected to emerge:

1. How does the second generation of Indian-Americans view the practice of arranged marriage, and what aspects of the practice are considered relevant to them?
2. How are parental expectations about marriage transmitted to this generation of Indian-American youth?
3. What are the most important considerations of Indian-American youth in determining their future marriages? Which premarital social practices do they engage in, and what do they disclose about their experiences?
4. How do Indian-American youth view the concepts of choice and autonomy regarding making important life decisions, including their future marriages?
5. How do Indian-American youth and parents discuss marriage expectations? What kinds of communication are exchanged and disclosed?

As discussed in the introduction, inherent in all of these questions are sub-topics of personal freedom, agency, gender, power, duty, respect, obligation, loyalty, love, sexuality and emotional expression. Each of these has bearing on attitudes and feelings of both youth and parents about arranged marriage as a relevant practice and tradition. Quantitative and qualitative data collections were aimed at gathering as much material as possible regarding all aspects of these research questions.

Quantitative Data Collection

This component of the research consisted of collecting quantitative data from both youth and adults, utilizing either a paper/pencil or electronic version of a survey designed to ascertain attitudes and positions about arranged marriage traditions, as well as underlying issues that may contribute to specific feelings about the custom.

Data Collection Instrument

For this portion of data collection, I used a Likert-scale⁹ format on a survey to collect objective data on attitudes and behaviors about the areas of marriage and family, choice, and emotional expression. I chose the Likert-scale format for its ease of use as well as its straightforward organization and style. Likert scales are a commonly used method for survey collection; they are easy to understand, and allow participants to respond in a degree of agreement. Additionally, coding is very manageable when accumulating data, because a single number represents the response (Maranell 2009). Items on the survey were designed to reflect attitudes and behaviors in each of these above-mentioned three realms, that relate directly or indirectly to how traditions of arranged marriage may be

⁹ Maranell (2009) describes Likert scales as easily constructed, highly reliable instruments used in measurements of attitudes, opinions and beliefs to provide useful and meaningful results in research.

transmitted, negotiated and discussed. In the questionnaire,¹⁰ participants were asked to choose among five responses for each statement. The responses were: strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Surveys for youth and adults were divided into three sections with statements that addressed the following three areas: 1) marriage and family (34 statements); 2) choice (15 statements); and 3) emotional expression (20 statements). Some of the statements on the questionnaire mirrored one another with the exact same wording for adults and youth, in order to gather meaningful and comparative data from each group. In other statements, words were changed slightly as needed to reflect the point of view of a youth or adult participant. (See Appendix A for the youth and adult surveys). The following examples illustrate both types of statements:

Example of a mirrored statement, which appears with exactly the same wording on both adult and youth surveys: *The practice of arranged marriage is still relevant in today's society.*

Example of a statement in which words are changed slightly, but address the same topic:

Youth: *Arranged marriage is acceptable to me if I can participate in the process of finding a suitable candidate.*

Adult: *Arranged marriage would be acceptable to my child if he/she participates in the process of finding a suitable candidate.*

Statements on the surveys were constructed based mainly on my review of literature about the topic of arranged marriage. Additionally my personal experiences of observation and participation with Indian families and their processes of arranged

¹⁰ The terms “survey” and “questionnaire” are used interchangeably in this section to refer to the Likert scale completed by participants in this study.

marriages also helped to shape the survey. With few exceptions, the literature review did not produce specific research on previously designed questionnaires, scales or inventories on the topics covered in the survey, which might have been useful in guiding the construction of the survey statements or specific wording for the items on the survey. However, the literature did present data in various categories that helped me to organize the statements in each section of the survey.

Two exceptions include a study conducted by DeSouza, Kumar and Shastri (2009) about youth attitudes in India, which included 56 statements in a survey about a broad range of topics. In this study there was only one question which directly related to arranged marriage, and one which addressed autonomy in major life decisions, including marriage. An examination of the World Values Survey,¹¹ which measures socio-cultural change around the world, helped to provide a model from which to develop the format and substance of the survey.

In addition to the literature noted in the previous chapter, I drew upon information gleaned from informal interviews that I conducted with Indian-American parents and youth during 2008-2010, which also served as basic, introductory pilot studies for this project. This information provided background and material for papers (unpublished), written during my coursework in the Childhood Studies program, and it also laid some groundwork for the development of this survey and the project as a whole.

Opportunities for personal observations and participation took place over the course of several years prior to and during this research. Having traveled extensively in southern India between 2000 and 2013, and also having had numerous interactions and communications with the Indian-American community since 2000 through the present

¹¹ See worldvaluessurvey.org

time via personal and professional connections, I felt that these experiences also provided a fair amount of knowledge to contribute to the construction of the survey statements.

In particular, two significant personal experiences with Indian couples who had arranged marriages also played a role in my thought process regarding issues which I felt would be appropriate to address through the questionnaire. In these instances, I had rather extensive experiences of participating in the arranged marriage process for Indian friends, one of whom has a successful marriage, and the other whose marriage very unfortunately collapsed after less than a year. My roles varied over time from observer, to confidante, to counselor, to advisor, to trusted auntie (a term of respect given to family members and to friends who are considered like family). In these capacities, my opinions seemed to be valued immensely, which caused me to feel varying degrees of both trepidation and appreciation at the same time. These experiences certainly served to enlighten my thinking on the topic as well as to intensify my interest in it.

Furthermore, my own personal life experiences with dating as a prelude to marriage and living as a single woman seemed to be the antithesis of Indian women's experiences. My foundation for knowledge about arranged marriage grew from my experiences with Indian culture; however, I also had a lifetime of observation and experience of western dating practice, which often seemed to me to be haphazard at best, as if a girl was 'lucky enough' to find a mate through a relatively limited social circle. Before Internet dating became popular and acceptable in mainstream society, there was somewhat of a stigma attached to 'needing help' to find a mate, at least in the culture in which I was raised in the '70's and '80's. This was curious to me, as I questioned what would be the chances of finding a compatible potential mate without a little help, and furthermore, there was a

stigma attached to both needing such help, as well as to being single after a certain age, usually by the mid to late 20's (which still seems to be true in Indian culture). It also seemed quite contradictory to me that a divorcé seemed to have less stigma attached to her because she had a spouse, at least for awhile. Thus, my reflections on this personal life history in a rather insular cultural environment also contributed to my thought processes in the construction of the survey.

Sections of the Survey

The following passages describe each of the three sections of the survey and the statements contained in each part. Although much of the literature reviewed for this project had some degree of influence in creating the data collection instrument, specific authors whose research was particularly helpful in constructing survey statements are highlighted.

Section I of the Survey: Marriage and Family

This portion of the survey consists of 34 statements, eight of which strike at the heart of the study and the main research question regarding the relevancy, desire and importance of arranged marriage traditions for both adults and youth (numbers 1-6 and 10-11). Research on marriage by Coontz (2005), George (2006), Seth (2008), Cherlin (2009), DeSouza, Kumar and Shastri (2009), and George and George (2010), particularly informed these statements. Six statements (numbers 17-23) focus upon matching elements that may be considered as necessary requirements for kinship (Williams 2009) and in searching for a prospective spouse; these statements were constructed based on reviews of bride and bridegroom want ads which appear on matrimonial websites and in newspapers. The use of Internet matchmaking websites as resources for finding potential

spouses is spotlighted in statement numbers 13-14.

Several statements (numbers 8, 12, 15-16) address the acceptability of arranged marriage as a choice if youth can participate in the decision-making process, and the suitability of youth to make decisions about prospective life partners. Investigations into adolescent agency and autonomy and parental authority by Smetana and Asquith (1994), Kagitcibasi (2005) and Oswell (2013) assisted the construction of these statements. Exploration of identity formation and modern gender issues by Miller (1995), Kashyap (2004) and Kurien (2005) informed statement number 9 in the survey. Items about dating and engaging in romantic relationships (numbers 31-33), the importance of romantic love as a foundation for marriage (number 7), and the influence of western culture upon marriage, (numbers 30 and 34) also are included. All of these statements were influenced by readings of Dion and Dion (1996); Popenoe, Elshtain and Blankenhorn (1996); Coontz (2005); George (2006); Cherlin (2009) and George and George (2010).

To reflect modern-era social practices, two statements (numbers 23-24) elicit thought about marriage as a necessity for life satisfaction (Myers, Madathil and Tingle 2005), and one addresses cohabitation (number 28). Three statements (numbers 25-27) address the taboo of divorce (Amato 1994; Browning 2003; Gheewalla 2004; Ravindra 2013), while one statement (number 29) touches upon one of the hottest topics in today's marriage debate, that of same-sex marriage (Vanita 2005).

Section II of the Survey: Choice

Central to the question of arranged marriage is the concept of choice. In arranged marriages, parents always, and perhaps extended family and family friends, play a significant role in choosing a partner for a prospective bride or groom. The fifteen

statements on this section of the survey call into question concepts of youth autonomy, personal freedom and maturity, as well as parental rights, authority, duties and obligations in the marriage process.

Notions of parental approval, participation and authority in relationship control and spouse selection are addressed in statements 1-6 and 9, and guided by the works of Smetana and Asquith (1994); Smetana (2002); Dasgupta and Dasgupta (2002) and Daddis and Randolph (2010). Research by Smetana (2002), Kagitcibasi (2005) and Helwig (2006) informed items 7-8 and 10, which focus upon considering a collectivist rather than individualist approach to choice and decision making in eventual marriage.

In statements 11 and 15, the ideas of peer influence and comparison regarding choice about relationships are targeted, based on research by Daddis (2008b). The right to personal freedom regarding making choices is addressed in items 12-14, which has been studied in depth by Iyengar (2010) and Savani, Markus, Naidu, Kumar and Berlia (2010).

Section III of the Survey: Emotional Expression

Dating as a prelude to marriage, and prospective mate vetting and selection are topics that are sensitive in nature, and potentially fraught with tension, anxiety and emotionality. These issues are naturally bound to the questions of choice and autonomy in arranged marriage. To further explore these issues that evoke emotional arousal, this part of the questionnaire includes issues of personal privacy and disclosure of information between parents and children, as well as the ease of exchange of personal feelings and experiences. Statements in this section aim to uncover areas of potential pressure and conflicts between parents and youth as they navigate their personal lives in relation to the arranged marriage process.

Issues of management, control and disclosure of information as well as personal privacy about matters involving the opposite sex are included in statements 1-3, which were based on research by Jensen, Arnett, Feldman and Cauffman (2004); Smetana, Metzger, Gettman and Campione-Barr (2006); Mounts and Kim (2009) and Daddis and Randolph (2010). The ease of emotional expression as well as the labor of hiding emotions is addressed in items 4-11, informed by the comprehensive research of Shields (2002) and Hochschild (2003), as well as studies by Khandelwal (2002) and Roy (2002).

Concern and potential conflict about use and influence of media, technology and social networking as communication tools with and about the opposite sex are covered in statement numbers 12-15, based on work by Steyer (2002), Maira (2002) and Shankar (2008). Inclusion of these items also was influenced by extensive conversations with Indian-American parents in informal interviews prior to this research.

The ease and directness of expression of views and expectations regarding following Indian traditions of marriage and family are addressed in the last statements, numbers 16-20. Studies by Roy (2002), Farver, Bhadha and Narang (2002) and Mesquita (2003) contributed to the formation of these survey items, as did informal conversations with Indian-American youth in preparation for this project.

In sum, both adult and youth participants responded to 69 survey statements. Prior to recording their opinions, they also provided basic demographic data. (See Appendix B for the demographic information sheets).

Online Version of Survey

In addition to the paper/pencil version of the survey, I also administered the

questionnaire via Survey Monkey¹², an online data collection tool. I chose Survey Monkey for its easy accessibility, simple navigation, and specialized features which allowed me to custom design my questionnaire. Additionally, Survey Monkey is well recognized in both academic and business arenas, and it provided an online vehicle for data collection that is safe and secure. This tool was especially helpful in collecting data from participants who were referred to me through others via email, and for those who lived at a distance.

Survey Collection

My original intent was to collect 150 to 200 surveys each from both youth and adult participants. Due to numerous unexpected difficulties encountered in this portion of data collection (which are explained below), the final number of surveys collected were 176 from youth (73 males and 103 females) and 135 from adults (61 males and 74 females), for a combined total of 311 surveys. Paper/pencil surveys were completed in participant's homes, workplaces, places of worship, local public cafés, and at the campus centers of the Rutgers New Brunswick campus. Online surveys were completed from participants' homes or workplaces.

Survey Analysis

Data from the surveys was recorded, counted and coded for analysis using Microsoft Excel. Calculations of the mean responses of each survey statement were completed via Excel. Once the means were tallied, R programming was used to analyze and determine the statistical significance of difference between the means through the use of T-Tests.

For survey statements which were worded slightly differently for adults and youths but still focused upon the same topic, a basic comparison of means was conducted to

¹² See surveymonkey.com

determine similarities and differences of opinion between the generations. The mean value was selected for analysis because it is “relatively reliable, so that when samples are selected from the same population, sample means tend to be more consistent than other measures of center” (Triola 2006).

Qualitative Data Collection

Because the survey provided a report of answers to questions with predetermined response categories about Indian-American youths’ and adults’ views about arranged marriage and family life, choice and emotional expression, I wanted to expand the information gathered in this study to include qualitative data. To accomplish this, I approached this part of the research in a social constructivist manner, in order to generate theory that is thoroughly grounded in the lived experiences and social realities of Indian-American youth and parents. The aim of the method is to discover theories and explanations that are grounded in empirical data which is extracted from in-depth interviews about the lived experiences of the subjects of this study (Bernard and Ryan 2010). The purpose of these interviews was to expand upon the opinions gathered through the surveys, and to obtain rich data to understand participants’ meanings, perspectives and relationships.¹³ My original plan was to conduct approximately 25 interviews of youth and 25 interviews of parents. At the conclusion of the data collection period, I was able to obtain interviews with 59 people.

In total, I spoke with 28 adults in the following configurations: 10 individual interviews (8 females and 2 males), 7 dyads of married couples, and one group interview with 4 females. While speaking with youth participants, I conducted 19 individual

¹³ Maxwell (2005) defines rich data as that which is detailed, varied, and requires verbatim transcripts to discern full meaning.

interviews (13 females and 6 males), one dyad of sisters and 2 group interviews with 5 participants in each group; one group consisted of 4 boys and 1 girl, and the other group consisted of 1 boy and 4 girls). The total number of youth interviewed was 31 (20 females and 11 males). Some of these interviews included individuals who were related to each other. All of the interviewees also completed surveys. (See Appendix C for the interview protocols).

All of these interviews required me to negotiate relationships with the participants who were kind enough to offer their time and interest to my study. In some cases this was fairly straightforward, with those whom I knew previously, or with those who were referred to me by someone with whom my personal or professional relationship already was established. In other cases, the interviews were much like a cold call, in that I may have only met the person once, on the occasion of completing a survey.

These considerations forced me to think carefully about my role as a researcher, and to be ever cognizant of reflexivity. In discussing reflexivity as the “influence of the researcher on the setting or individual studied,” Joseph Maxwell (2005:108) points out the unavoidability and inevitability of such an effect. However, he further notes that it is important for the researcher to understand that while she should not consciously try to minimize this effect, it is necessary to understand how the researcher might be influencing what the informant says, as this affects the validity of the inferences that can be drawn from the interview.

Other considerations for the interview process listed by Seidman (2006) include the researcher’s awareness of gender biases, class hierarchy, social status, age differentials and linguistic differences. During the interview phase of my research, I spoke with

people from a variety of backgrounds and of varied ages, and tried to be ever cognizant of issues that may arise which possibly could inadvertently influence the outcome of the interview and hence the data itself. Seidman also notes that the researcher also must be aware of complicated issues of equity and reciprocity in the interview process, and be sensitive to the fact that the researcher “gets more out of the process than the participant” (2006:109). While recognizing that researchers cannot resolve inequities in society that may be reproduced in interviewing relationships, ultimately Seidman cautions researchers to be responsible enough to recognize and be conscious of them, keeping in mind that equity is an “ethical imperative” in research (2006:110).

Design and Conduct of Interviews

The aim of the interviews was to elicit narratives of assessments and contexts of the social world of Indian American youth and adults, as well as their perspectives and experiences of these as they relate to the preservation or evolution of marriage traditions. The design of the interview protocol was flexible to include semi-structured main, probing and follow up questions in order to adapt them to the relevance of the interviewees’ responses, as well as to my evolving knowledge of the meanings and interpretations of their responses (Rubin and Rubin 1995; Seidman 2006).

Interviews were conducted in-person wherever and whenever possible. These took place in participant’s homes, workplaces, places of worship, or local public cafés in south and central New Jersey. Several people graciously invited me to their homes, where I was able to observe personal surroundings that were illustrative of a wide range of socio-economic statuses. Workplaces I visited included schools, retail stores, restaurants and private business offices. Several interviews took place in local coffee shops such as

Starbucks or Barnes and Noble cafés, and some were conducted in small rooms adjacent to worship areas in temples or churches.

When it was not possible to meet personally, interviews were conducted on the phone. The majority of interviews for this study were conducted in-person, on a one-to-one basis. Occasionally I spoke to married couples, related family members, or students in dyads or small groups, only because of their time constraints and limited availability to meet with me. In these situations, I had to be alert to the possibility of inhibition, intimidation or persuasion of one respondent over another, and to note how the response of one person may be influenced by the response of another. Age and gender considerations also were important to note in these instances (Greene and Hogan 2005).

Interview Analysis

All of the interviews were audio recorded on cassette tapes, and notes were taken to record observations of emphasis upon specific points or emotions that emanated from the conversations. With the exception of one person, all participants agreed to audio recording of their responses. In the case of the person who declined, copious notes of responses were taken.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed for content and emerging themes. The interview transcripts revealed in-depth thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and concerns about topics that were introduced through the survey, and then expanded upon through the interviews. When responses to interviews became repetitive and no new information came forth, the interview phase of the study was completed.

The major portion of data analysis occurred during repeated review of the transcripts and occasionally listening to audio tapes multiple times for clarification of words or voice

tone, inflection and volume to emphasize a point. From time to time it became necessary to closely examine subtleties of the conversation to differentiate accent versus intonation that would impact analysis and interpretation of the respondent's statements.

Coding of Transcripts and Categorization of Themes

Analysis of interviews was completed manually rather than using a qualitative data analysis software program. Because I was looking for specific and substantive issues that related to items on the survey statements, the word search function in Microsoft Word was helpful in this regard. In general, I sought information in the transcripts which either supported or was discrepant with issues related to major themes of the survey statements, thus allowing the categorization of themes from the interview data to emerge.

Much is written about how to code, subdivide codes and categorize themes in qualitative data analysis, however as a novice researcher, I followed the basic processes set forth in guidelines suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1996), Bernard and Ryan (2010) and Joseph Maxwell (2005). All of these experts discuss in detail the importance of thoroughly reading through the interview transcripts, determining and assigning codes to text in order to identify and organize themes, and then writing memos to facilitate analytic thinking about the data. From these analytic tasks, I was able to discern grounded theory that emerged from the data, and to gain greater understanding of the relationships between and among youth and parents which impacted the formation of their attitudes about arranged marriage.

The interviews were personally and emotionally engaging for participants as they related their individual stories. On some occasions, participants' emotions overflowed into tears and revelations of highly personal details of their lives, as well as intensely

pensive moments. These expressions of emotions contributed to understanding the insights the participants conveyed. In these instances, it was challenging to find the right words to illustrate and then code a participant's particular emotional experience, even though extensive field notes were taken during the interviews to describe the expression of emotion as personal stories were shared. As Saldana indicates, "hundreds of words exist to describe human emotion, and thus the repertoire of potential codes is vast" (2009:89). He notes that it is important to discern the context and process of the emotion in order to code accurately, however, these are still subject to the personal interpretation of the interviewer.

Validity Checks

As Joseph Maxwell points out, "there are important differences between quantitative and qualitative designs in the ways they typically deal with validity threats" (2005:107). Qualitative researchers are challenged with the task of how to rule out specific plausible alternatives and threats to explanations and interpretations (Maxwell 2005). Maxwell further states that researcher bias and reactivity (also known as reflexivity) are the two major threats to validity in qualitative research (2005). In order to avoid these threats, he cautions the researcher to be aware of her possible biases and how these may affect the outcome of analysis and interpretation, as well as to recognize that while it is inevitable that the researcher is part of the world she studies, the researcher also must understand how she "influences what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences" that can be drawn from the interview data (Maxwell 2005:109).

Sampling, Participants and Access

New Jersey is home to the fifth largest population of Indian-Americans in the United

States, while Chicago and its surrounding suburban sprawl, have the third largest Indian-American population in the country.¹⁴ In fact, an area of central New Jersey is known as America's liveliest Little India, with nearly 400 businesses owned by and catering to the very large Indian population in this region.¹⁵ Given this demographic, there certainly were high numbers of people to approach; however, as Rankin and Bhopal (2001) noted, successfully soliciting participants in South Asian communities often can be difficult for a number of reasons.

There were several challenges that I encountered throughout the data collection period, primarily due to the inability to access participants despite the large population and numerous outreach efforts to access them. Specifically, I was looking for adolescent participants who are second generation Indian-Americans, meaning that they were born and raised in the United States. The parent participants whom I sought were first generation Indian-Americans, who immigrated to the United States after 1980 (George 2006).

Additionally, I had some concern of being viewed as an outsider to the Indian culture, and as Rubin and Rubin (2005) noted, crossing such boundaries can be threatening to potential participants of the study. Because I obviously am not of Indian origin, it seems that my automatic "outsider" status could be viewed as an impediment to understanding or as a threat of exposing information that I might learn through the research process. On the other hand, that outsider status suddenly became blurred when I shared with potential

¹⁴ Indian-American Demographics (South Asian), 9 Mar. 2013. Retrieved August 23, 2013 (<http://www.ameridia.com/resources/demographics/southasian.html>).

¹⁵ Berger, Joseph. April 27, 2008. "A Place Where Indians, Now New Jerseyans, Thrive," *New York Times Online* 27 Apr. 2008. Retrieved August 30, 2013. (http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/27/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/27india.nj.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

participants that I had been to India several times, and had greatly enjoyed many and varied exposures to the culture.

Research Sites and Locations

The initial effort to gather participants began with approaching local Hindu temples in southern New Jersey, Christian and Catholic church groups in central New Jersey, and groups associated with Parivar International, based in Chicago.¹⁶ Through personal networking, I made contact with people at all of these locations, and all indicated interest and willingness to assist with obtaining participants for the study. Numerous emails and phone calls were made to initiate contact with these groups; in most cases, several contact attempts were made before receiving a response to my inquiry.

The Swaminaryan Temple in Cherry Hill, the Jain Temple in Pennsauken and the Berlin Hindu Temple (also known as the India Temple Association) were the first locations that I targeted in southern New Jersey to gain access to Indian-American families. Groups associated with Parivar International, a Christian ministry based in Chicago which serves Indian families, also generated participants. I had been in contact with the executive director of this group prior to beginning this research, and he helped tremendously with obtaining participants. Through more extended networking, I learned of groups of Tamil and Malayali (also termed Keralite)¹⁷ Catholics and Christians in central New Jersey, and I contacted them for additional participants, with the aim of finding a cross section of Indians who have origins in various states in India. Access to

¹⁶ See www.parivarinternational.org. PARIVAR is a non-profit organization based in North America that serves Asian Indian families, regardless of caste, creed, nationality or religion. Parivar refers to family in the Hindi language.

¹⁷ Tamil refers to people who originate from Tamilnadu, a state in southern India. Malayali and Keralite refer to people who originate from Kerala, another state in southern India. Both of these states have a large population of Christians and Catholics.

these groups was facilitated by a Catholic priest, who was director of the Multi-Cultural Ministry of the Diocese of Metuchen, as well as his associate. It is from all of these groups that I obtained the majority of adult participants and some of the youth participants for the study.

However, when it became apparent that none of these sites would yield enough youth participants for the research, I approached several Indian-American student groups on the main campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, where there is a very large population of Indian-American students. Much to my disappointment, there was little response to numerous outreach efforts to invite participation of the members of these groups. To expand upon this effort, I enlisted the help of the Director of Student Involvement, who sent several additional emails to the officers of these groups to gauge their interest and attempt to engage their participation. These efforts also yielded few replies. This director then suggested setting up recruitment tables in the student centers to attract potential participants. This effort proved to be much more fruitful, and I was able to obtain many youth participants for the surveys in this manner.

During the spring and fall terms of 2012, I made several trips to the Busch and College Avenue campuses of Rutgers, which were recommended as the best campus locations for participant recruitment by the Director of Student Involvement due to their high concentration of Indian-American students. On each occasion, I spent approximately six hours at a recruitment table in the student centers, with signs advertising the need for participants for the study. Students who were willing to take part typically completed the survey on the spot, and many indicated curiosity about it, often commenting about the relevance of the study, and that they had conflicting feelings about

the topic. Names of students who completed surveys were entered into a raffle to win Starbucks gift cards, which was used as an incentive to enlist their participation.

In addition to these participants, I also called upon various personal acquaintances of Indian-American heritage who I knew personally through my work in the Evesham Township School District. Rubin and Rubin indicated that “in cultural studies, it is common to start with a personal acquaintance who is a member of the group being studied” (2005:89). Then through these acquaintances, several additional referrals for participation were obtained. This snowball-sampling effort produced participants of varied backgrounds and contributed to the diversity of the sample. Such snowball sampling, defined by Noy as a procedure through which the “researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants” (2008:30), was quite helpful in obtaining access to people who otherwise would not have been available to me.

Participants

The ages of youth selected for this study were between 15 and 21 years of age.¹⁸ Depending upon the age of the adolescent participant (minor age below 18, or having reached his/her eighteenth birthday), either informed consent or assent plus informed consent of the parent was obtained. (See Appendix D for youth consent and assent letters).

There was no specific age range designated for adults at the outset, and the age range obtained was between 30 and 67. In the initial stages of the research, I anticipated that I

¹⁸ This age range of participants has been utilized for studies by Daddis (2008a); Daddis (2008b); Daddis and Randolph (2010); Jensen, Arnett, Feldman and Cauffman (2004); Furman, Simon, Shaffer and Bouchey (2002) and Smetana and Asquith (1994) in their work with adolescents regarding autonomy, parental authority, disclosure and decision-making.

would be able to collect surveys and interviews from related family members (e.g. mother/child, father/child) as well as from unrelated participants. At the conclusion of data collection, there were only 25 family combinations, as it was much more difficult to obtain related family members as participants than was originally anticipated. (See Appendix D for adult consent letters).

Adult informants for this study had very diverse backgrounds, hailing from 18 different states of Indian origin (see Appendix E). Both adults and youth also practiced a variety of religions, though the majority of them were Hindus, reflecting the demographic of their homeland, where Hinduism is most widely practiced as well (see Appendix F). Additional demographic information about participants' ages and educational levels are in Appendix G. Information about household makeup, and travel to their homeland of India are noted in Appendix H. The places where participants completed surveys are listed in Appendix I. Throughout the chapters, the ages and religions of participants are noted in parentheses after their names. The notation of Christian/NC refers to a Christian who is not Catholic.

Challenges and Successes with Data Collection, Sampling and Access

Originally I anticipated that data collection would take approximately six to eight months; however due to numerous problems encountered in the process of obtaining participants, the data collection period stretched to nearly fourteen months. I began the process in late August 2011 and concluded it in December 2012. Although New Jersey has a large Indian-American population in concentrated areas of the state, particularly in central and northern New Jersey, gaining access to them proved far more difficult than originally expected. After researching potential sites in the immediate south Jersey area,

I selected the above mentioned temples because of the size of their memberships and their relative proximity to me. These temples have governing boards or administrative units, and I contacted various people noted on their websites until I was directed to a person who could coordinate my visits.

After introducing myself and explaining the purpose of my contact, I obtained the necessary letters of invitation and permission for the Institutional Review Board, which approved all of the sites. Once these were cleared, I set the times of my recruiting visits in advance and also sent copies of the surveys in advance as requested. Visits were scheduled on the weekends when members gathered for worship, instruction and fellowship. However, after going through the entire Institutional Review Board approval process, the Swaminaryan Temple in Cherry Hill declined participation when I called to schedule dates to come onsite. No reason was given other than that they could not accommodate me at that time.

A similar disappointing experience occurred with the Jain Temple in Pennsauken. Although I was able to make one visit there and speak to a few people, it became quickly apparent that I was greeted with suspicion and hesitation. This was quite puzzling to me, because I had several advance conversations with my contact there, and fully explained the purpose of the study as well as what I hoped to accomplish on my visits. Although there were at least a hundred adults and youth present on the day of my visit, several hours passed with opportunity to speak to only two youths. I approached my contact again about trying to get some of the people to talk with me before they departed, but was told simply to be patient. As time passed, it was clear to me that something was amiss, and after three more hours of empty waiting, I also departed.

After such an unproductive day, I followed up with an inquiry to my contact person. Much to my surprise, I was told that a couple of the members were not happy that a researcher was on the premises to obtain information. I was advised that the effort would be suspended until these members could decide whether or not I would be permitted to continue. Even though official approval had been sought and obtained for me to be present, it appeared that there were factions within the membership, and that a conflict could result over the matter of my presence.

Though it was unspoken, I questioned whether the fact that I am a White woman (hence, “outsider” as described by Rubin and Rubin 2005), probing into Indian culture may have been a contributing factor to this experience. Sadler, Lee, Lim and Fullerton indicated that “some cultural groups are reluctant to volunteer personal information because of the risk of social, political or other discriminatory repercussions” (2010:369), and it appeared that members of this organization were not going to jeopardize their reputation or status by taking the risk of talking with me. Furthermore, this particular situation raised the question of reflexivity for me; it caused me wonder in what ways my mere presence on the premises affected the outcome of the visit, and how quickly it seemed to change their views on permission to conduct the research (Maxwell 2005). Because of this issue, I decided that I would eliminate this site as well, and move on to the next one. Needless to say, these early experiences in fall 2011 were disappointing at best, and created the necessity to gather as many participants as possible from other sites.

There was more success at the Berlin Hindu Temple, also known as the India Temple Association. A vibrant organization with many worship services as well as educational and social activities for adults and youth, this temple provided several participants for

both surveys and interviews. Their staff welcomed me, introduced me to potential participants, allowed me to observe their meetings and worship, and provided a space for me to talk with both adults and adolescents. I made several trips to this temple throughout the fall months of 2011. Occasionally there were difficulties in getting participants to complete surveys on the spot; several of them wanted to take the survey home with a promise to return it later in the day or the following week. This practice was discouraged, and every attempt was made to have participants complete the surveys on the premises.

Because several people indicated interest but were pressed for time, I realized the need for a version of the survey that could be emailed to participants, and began to create the survey online utilizing Survey Monkey. This online version subsequently was used for informants that were obtained through all the other organizations which provided access to their members. However, even with the convenience of the online version, there were many instances in which I had to send email reminders to participants to request their completion of the survey in a timely manner. It was not uncommon to send up to three or four reminders to complete and submit the survey.

Parivar International, the Christian ministry based in Chicago which is dedicated to serving and preserving Indian-American families, was immensely helpful in obtaining participants both in Chicago, and through their northeastern office located in New York. I made two trips to Chicago to meet with the executive director and to recruit participants, once in November 2011 and again in May 2012. I also worked closely with the director of the northeastern operation of Parivar to obtain participants.

The executive director in Chicago graciously took me to some sites in the suburbs of Chicago, where I was able to meet with people and explain my project. These sites included a few churches where people gathered for worship, education and fellowship. I also attended a summer picnic with him and his family, during which he introduced me to several more potential participants. These efforts yielded some participants, but it also was extremely useful to spend time with him, as his work to help sustain Indian family values is directly related to my project. We had several productive conversations which yielded valuable insights that helped me immensely as I worked through the study. He also sent emails to selected portions of his mailing lists to request participation in my study. These efforts resulted in several online participants in the survey.

The New York area director of Parivar also was extremely helpful in obtaining participants. By sending emails to his mailing lists with links to my online survey, I obtained several more qualified participants. Though it took several attempts and pleas for participation, a fair number of people responded and added to the final count of participants. In addition to these efforts, I also attended a Parivar function in Philadelphia in fall 2012, where I was able to speak directly to various ministry leaders in the area, and obtain a few more participants through them.

The central New Jersey Diocese of Metuchen includes Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties, each of which has a high concentration of Indian-Americans. An Indian Catholic priest is the director of the Multi-Cultural Ministry of the diocese, and his associate also is an Indian-Catholic priest. Through collaboration with them, I was invited to several social functions which immediately followed church services held at various locations within the diocese in New Jersey, as well as in Staten

Island, New York, where a church also hosted these events. At these functions I was permitted to speak to mixed groups of adults and adolescents about my study and invite their participation. By attending many of these events between fall 2011 and fall 2012, I collected a considerable number of surveys, and also obtained several participants for interviews as well. Typically my presence at these events was welcomed and resulted in lively conversation about the topic of the research. The majority of informants obtained through this effort were Catholic.

Attempts to recruit at high schools to target the 15-17 year old age group were not successful, mainly due to administrative reluctance to become involved with collecting parental permission slips. Although I made numerous attempts via telephone and email to contact administrators at high schools in south and central New Jersey which had high numbers of Indian-American students, only one administrator at a high school in south Jersey responded to my request for help. After two conversations with him to explain the purpose and requirements of the study, he declined to assist me any further. He further stated that most administrators would not have the time or interest to help with the study, because they are too busy with other things.

Although as Sadler et al. stated, “The Internet’s rapidly evolving capacities are creating extraordinary social networking opportunities for educators and scientists” (2010: 373), outreach efforts to several other adult Indian-American groups through their homepages and social networking sites yielded no response at all. Emails and phone calls were not returned. It was only by establishing personal relationships by phone and in-person visits to the groups noted above that I was able to gain access to the informants who contributed to this study. Additionally, it is important to note that developing

personal and ongoing relationships with the leaders of these groups was an essential foundation to being able to approach members of their organizations. This took more time than I originally had planned at the outset of my fieldwork but it was well worth the efforts, as it resulted in meeting so many of the participants who graciously gave their time and provided viewpoints that are essential to the study.

Chapter Three: Dating in Indian-American Life

Until the late eighteenth century, marriages were arranged between couples as a means to preserve economic, cultural and political interests, according to historian Stephanie Coontz. In her comprehensive narrative of the history of marriage, Coontz documents the evolution of the system of marrying for economic and political advancement, which “was practically universal across the globe for many millennia” (2005:7). She states that due to a series of political, economic and cultural changes which swept Europe during the Enlightenment era, the practice of arranged marriage began to erode, and by the late eighteenth century, “the notion of free choice and marriage for love” triumphed as a cultural ideal in Western Europe and North America (2005:7).

In contemporary western culture, partnerships are formed by individuals who freely choose to marry first and foremost for love. Marriage is deemed to be far more about personal satisfaction than about property and politics, which in turn has shaped expectations about love and commitment (Coontz 2005). The modern measure of successful marriage has shifted from primary emphasis upon financial, familial and social gains to how well the emotional needs of individuals within a couple are met (Coontz 2005). This transformation of marriage has had profound effects upon the way Indian-Americans approach it, particularly for the second generation of youth. Their path to marriage is strewn with numerous influences of their western upbringing, and unprecedented options for personal growth and mate selection that were not available to their parents, who for the most part, were brought up in an Indian culture that embraced the practice of arranged marriage.

For this generation of Indian-American youth, public discussion of marriage and the dating experiences that precede it is “fraught with the politics of not only gender and sexuality, but also nation, generation and race” (Maira 2002:153). Many questions arise in moving from the model of arranged marriage to the model of love marriage. The ideals and retention of collectivist values which focus upon subordination of individual goals for the sake of harmony within the kin group are deeply embedded in arranged marriage. In contrast, the model of love marriage is grounded in a more individualistic approach to personal fulfillment and gratification. This dichotomy ignites controversy regarding loyalty and deference to family, and allegiance to cultural and religious traditions that define the society (Dion and Dion 1996).

The road to eventual marriage and creation of a family is quite different for Indian-American youth than it has been for their parents. The young women and men cited in this chapter have far more personal freedom in their young adulthood than their parents ever had at the same age, just by being allowed to mingle with members of the opposite sex and eventually to date. Second generation Indian-American youth face questions that were not salient for their parents during adolescence such as: Which premarital experiences social practices might I engage in? Can I date? If so, what are the guidelines? How can I have a social life that will be acceptable within Indian culture, but also allow me to participate in social practices that are common to American culture? Do I want to maintain, modify, or abandon cultural traditions that guide premarital social activity? These queries raise other questions regarding the exertion of personal agency and adolescent strategies to circumvent parental boundaries in order to engage in social activities that may be deemed unacceptable.

Dating as a means to simply socialize is often viewed suspiciously by parents, and causes tension between them and their children; in most cases, dating comes with several parameters and restrictions (Leonard 1997; Gupta 1999; Rangaswamy 2000; Dasgupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Maira 2002; Shankar 2008). According to Maira, parental anxiety is easily aroused about dating and marriage because these “are perceived as intimately linked with the continuity of the ethnic group and the maintenance of group boundaries” (2002:153).

As the voices of youth demonstrate in the passages that follow, there are many limitations to the exertion of Indian-American youths’ personal agency regarding making choices about dating. Though second generation youth enjoy more social autonomy than their parents’ generation, it is evident that there are significant limits to youths’ freedom to participate in social activities in comparison to their western peers. Parents have specific expectations and rules for their children that are grounded in cultural traditions and varying degrees of religious beliefs, as well as their own experiences of when they were younger (Leonard 1997). In several conversations during interviews, parents expressed apprehension about dating through their focus upon the negative effects of dating in adolescence, with little mention of any positive social or developmental benefits.

This chapter aims to discover what Indian-American youth are doing and thinking regarding dating as both a social practice and a precursor to marriage. It also intends to answer the question of how they exercise personal agency in navigating their social lives amid conflicting cultural expectations. The views of parents also are presented to illustrate the values and codes of conduct that they transmit to their children, which

impact youths' participation in the world of dating. The intersections of the views of youths and parents with culture, gender, patriarchy and agency are addressed to discover how Indian-American youth negotiate their social lives in ways that will eventually impact their future marriage decisions.

The World of Adolescent Dating in the Twenty-First Century

The concepts of dating and arranged marriage appear to be mutually exclusive. By its nature, arranged marriage presumes that potential mates are located and vetted by the families and friends of the prospective bride and groom. In its strictest practice, couples in arranged marriages may not even meet until their wedding day (Coontz 2005; Seth 2008). However, second generation Indian-American youth have grown up in a western world in which dating a variety of people prior to marriage is the norm and premarital sex is part of that experience. According to Madsen (2008), most youth begin dating during adolescence while still under the care of their parents, and more than 70% of them engage in romantic relationships by age 18, with a large proportion of these relationships lasting a year or more. The notion of having a boyfriend or girlfriend can emerge as early as elementary school. Larsen, Clore and Wood report that "beginning around the sixth or seventh grade, American adolescents find themselves spending much time in a world of peers where romantic involvement is increasingly expected" (1999:25). It is common practice for middle schools to have a variety of social events in which boys and girls aged 12 through 14 socialize with one another and claim to be dating; dances are customary, and romantic crushes on members of the opposite sex are ordinary occurrences. Sexual terms and talk are part of their vocabulary and psyche in ways that did not exist in previous generations (Twenge 2014).

By the time western-bred adolescents are in high school, many claim to have had a few boyfriends or girlfriends, and engagement in early sexual experiences including intercourse is not out of the ordinary (Twenge 2014). Estimates of sexual activity among adolescents vary; the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states that in 2013, almost half of high school students (47%) reported that they had sexual intercourse.¹⁹ In their earlier study of adolescent development, Gutgesell and Payne offer a higher estimate of sexual activity among teens. They claim that “nearly two thirds of high school seniors have had sexual intercourse, one half are currently sexually active and one fifth of adolescents have had four or more partners” (2004:82). They also state that “of those who are sexually active, 25% become infected with a sexually transmitted disease each year,” and that “female adolescents in the USA continue to have one of the world’s highest teenage pregnancy rates” (2004:82). However, the Child Trends Data Bank report of 2015 indicates that the proportion of high school students reporting that they have had sexual intercourse has consistently declined between 1991 and 2013, from 54% to 47%, but the percentage of students who are sexually experienced increases with each grade level through high school.²⁰ In his extensive study of emerging adults, Arnett found that virginity until marriage has ceased to exist as an ideal for most emerging adults, stating that national surveys indicate “over 80% of 18-23-year-olds have had sexual intercourse, and about 95% of Americans in our time have had their first experience of sexual intercourse before marriage” (2015:93). Yet maintaining virginity until marriage is still highly important in Indian culture, so

¹⁹ See “Reproductive Health.” Office of Adolescent Health, US Department of Health and Human Services, December 23, 2015. <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/#>. Retrieved December 30, 2015.

²⁰ See “Sexually Experienced Teens.” <https://www.childtrends.org> December 2015. Retrieved December 30, 2015.

there is a direct conflict of values regarding sexuality for Indian-American youth who are growing up in a much more socially casual environment that no longer censures sexual activity outside of marriage (Leonard 1997; Gupta 1999; Rangaswamy 2000; Dasgupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Maira 2002; Shankar 2008; George and George 2010).

In America, the sexual revolution of the 1960's and 1970's demolished the expectation of young women remaining virgins until marriage (Arnett 2015). But there has not been a similar sweeping social change among Indians, and the protection of virginity is an over-arching theme in the construction of rules that are meant in particular to regulate the behavior of females and protect the social order. This gender-specific supervision causes a great deal of tension between parents and daughters. The engagement in any form of sexual activity outside of marriage is considered a serious taboo in Indian culture, but it has been an accepted practice in western culture for the last few decades (Gupta 1999; Dasgupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Maira 2002; Shankar 2008; George and George 2010). This difference is a clear cultural conflict for Indian-American youth. However despite the conflict, it appears that much clandestine sexual activity occurs, which in turn generates other emotional conflicts for youth who often feel compelled to hide their relationships and activities. Youth in this study allude to these activities and issues, as does Anita Jain (2008) in her memoir of her early adult years which were filled with covert relationship experimentation.

The unprecedented freedoms in love and sex which are common to the current generation of young adults in America, along with the lack of gender roles and rigid rules for how they meet and mingle, can be quite vexing to Indian-American parents who

struggle to guide children in their social world. And Indian-American youth must contend with a variety of social situations and pressures in which the choices they make may or may not be in alignment with parental expectations. Elements of these themes and the discourses which surround them are elucidated in the following sections of this chapter, and help to discover the ways and means that youth are maneuvering through the rocky terrain of adolescent social life.

Indian-American youth in this study claim a wide variety of social experiences, however many of them expressed clear boundaries regarding what is allowed and acceptable within their families and within their culture. Their experiences of dating have fewer similarities to their western counterparts and more differences. Although several of the female youth indicated enchantment with the idea of romance, they were quick to qualify that it seems more of a fantasy than a reality at this point in their young lives. They expressed the desire for romance in future relationships, most importantly, in the relationship that would lead to marriage. Young romance is highly discouraged in Indian-American culture for many reasons, but most especially because it is a major distraction to other priorities in their lives, such as academic achievement, school activities and family obligations.

Parents' Limited Dating Experiences

For the majority of parents interviewed in this study, marriage came first, and then came love, as was the case for their own parents in the preceding generation. Most of the adults who spoke with me had arranged marriages; some had semi-arranged marriages, and just a few had love marriages. Even if partners found one another without initial parental intervention and arrangement, they did not have a prolonged period of dating

before marriage, and they sought parental blessing upon their proposed union. None of the adults spent years mixing and mingling with multiple potential matches. In most cases, the adults in this study were introduced to one another and married within a very short period of time, ranging from a few weeks to less than a year. For them, dating meant getting to know the person who would become their spouse either through an arrangement, or through self-selection followed by family scrutiny, consideration and approval. For the limited few who had love marriages, the spouses did not date several other people prior to meeting one another, nor did they experience breaking up and coming back together. With the exception of only two couples, they did not stretch their dating relationship beyond two years before marrying.

Moreover, very few of the adults spoke of romance or of a love affair in their relationships, and none discussed early sexual experiences. Instead they focused on the shared commitment and ability to create a successful union that would lead to establishment of a happy family life. That is not to say that romance or premarital sexual experience did not occur. However, that aspect of relationship was not brought up at all in interviews, likely due to privacy, shyness, or unwillingness to discuss highly personal information. DasGupta and DasDasgupta explain that in Indian culture, “sexuality is something that is done, but never revealed to others. It is a very private practice” (2002:123). Likewise, it also may be attributed to the greater cultural emphasis on marriage as the foundation for creating a family life, and with less importance on the aspects of romance, sexual intimacy and self-fulfillment (Gupta 1999c; Seth 2008; Ravindra 2013). In conversations during interviews, youth in this study did not offer

observations of romance between their parents, with the exception of Prabir (17, Hindu), who noted,

What I see between my parents, it is more like a familial love; they are together as partners of the household; they are together as parents; they have their fights, their good moments; but they don't act like they are really romantic with each other.

The adult participants who spoke with me also indicated that they fulfilled traditional expectations of their own parents and of their culture that they marry and have children, and create a family. To do otherwise would not reflect well on them, their parents, their extended families, or even the larger Indian society. As Sejal (41, Hindu) said, "We know what is expected, we know what we have to do for the good of everyone, and we hope our kids will do that too." Sejal's comments reflect the collectivist disposition of her generation, whom she described as being quite mindful of expectations to carry on marriage traditions that will be for the "good of everyone" as she indicated.

Unequivocally, all adults expressed their hopes and expectations that their children marry and have a family too.

Dating in Indian-American Culture

Dating is a hallmark of adolescence in western culture, and a social activity that may or may not lead to marriage. Dating can have several different meanings, particularly across generations; it can represent both casual and serious relationships with varying levels of intensity, with or without sexual intimacy, committed or not, and long-term or short duration. Dating may occur only for the sake of social interaction, or with the intention of developing a deeper, committed relationship. Romantic crushes and experimentation with physical affection and intimacy also are common to adolescent experience. Adolescents and young adults also may engage in 'friends with benefits'

relationships, that are not categorized as dating, but involve regular sexual encounters without the expectation of dating, romance or commitment (Arnett 2015; Twenge 2014). These relationships often are fraught with complication, confusion and misunderstanding, because of lack of clarity and undefined expectations which may differ for each partner.

But for many Indian-American youth, these experiences have not been an accepted part of their culture, and certainly not practices to engage in during early adolescence. If and when these occur in later adolescence, youth indicated high awareness that they would be expected to consider parental rules and boundaries for behavior with the opposite sex. Additionally, many of them remarked that dating should take place with the intention and condition of seriously vetting a potential partner for marriage, and not occur simply for the sake of socializing or for casually considering someone as a future mate.

Nonetheless, the majority of youth in this study (88%, $n = 155$) expressed the desire to have a dating relationship with a member of the opposite sex, and they feel that dating is a natural prelude to finding a life partner. Only 5% ($n = 9$) disagree with this while 7% ($n = 12$) are unsure. Parents on the other hand, appear to be not as eager for their children to experience dating, nor are they equally enthusiastic about the idea that dating should be a prelude to finding a life partner; 42% ($n = 57$) agree, while 38% ($n = 51$) disagree and 20% ($n = 51$) are unsure that their children should have a relationship with the opposite sex prior to finding their life partner. The adults' reservations regarding their children dating is not surprising, considering that most of them in this study have dated only the person they married, with very few exceptions. These adults were raised

with the notion that dating only occurs in the context of marriage preparation, and so the practice of dating in the teen years is nearly unfathomable to many of them.

Joita (43, Hindu) stated that when talking with her three children, she and her husband “are not going to promote dating ever, but we have to wait and see; we hope they won’t hide anything from us, and hope that they do come to us, and at that time we may dissuade them.” Her 14- year-old daughter is “way too young for boyfriends; but when she tells me about children having girlfriends and boyfriends, she says she doesn’t understand it either.” Dave (42, Christian/NC) stated that his teenage daughters would not approach the topic of having boyfriends. He said, “They don’t date; they don’t have boyfriends; they would never even ask us; they choose to follow the culture, so the subject has not been brought up.” He continued that he has difficulty understating the concept of dating and then breaking up with someone, noting that he has observed friends of his daughters who go from one person to another in a matter of months, continually repeating a pattern of establishing and then leaving relationships. He pondered, “What is the purpose of that? We are very sure that we don’t want someone who jumps from girl to girl; that is what happens here; I don’t understand it.”

Continuing the theme of not allowing dating, Raizel (53, Christian/NC) indicated that she does not permit her daughter, who is a senior in high school, to go out with boys one-on-one, because at that age “they are young and immature, so they can go in a group.” She added that she is well aware that her daughter’s peers may be dating and having different experiences, but she also expressed a desire to protect her daughter from early dating experiences that may be hurtful:

I know they have to live outside; they need to mingle with their friends, especially because the culture is very different. Here (in the USA) you cannot say that they

cannot go. Here the kids will make fun of you and things like that, but you have to make sure your child is protected, too.

For Indian-American youth who are enveloped within a western culture that suggests dating and relationship experimentation with a partner may be a desirable and common rite of passage of adolescence, it can be hard to mesh their cultural beliefs and values with practices that are foreign or uncomfortable for them as well as their parents (Khandelwal 2002; George 2006; Arnett 2015). Although the survey responses indicate that most Indian-American youth want to date, many of those who participated in interviews qualified that wish. Kopal (17, Hindu) expressed a desire to date, but her “parents never did it and they are against it,” and so she cannot do so freely or without guilt. Sajani (15, Jain) explained further cultural restrictions about dating:

Dating is out of the question. It’s not in the culture, and I don’t want to go against it. Maybe my parents will deal with it later when I’m about to marry. My parents have worries, but I want to follow traditions.

Mohita (20, Hindu) discussed the fusion of both western and Indian culture regarding dating:

I think dating is really important and I guess that is more of a Western culture thing, but having my parents involved is more like my culture . . . but when I do date someone, I can see me being with him for the rest of my life. But obviously, I can’t predict the future; if it doesn’t work out, then it doesn’t work out. I wouldn’t just do it because I have nothing better to do . . . I think I like to mix cultures. If my parents were to show me someone (as a potential spouse), I would obviously like to take a few months just to try to get to know the person.

Male youths also conveyed cultural parameters around dating that limit their participation too. Ketav (20, Hindu) spoke about discussions he had with his parents regarding dating, and how he feels about it:

My father especially says no dating; it is not part of the culture so I can’t do it. My mother though, says maybe you can start dating, but not right now; I don’t think you are ready for it; you are still young. When I am 25, I am thinking that by then not only

will I be older, but I also will be ridiculously inexperienced. In a sense it is somewhat like holding me hostage -- saying that if you do this, you will destroy any trust we have with you.

Chintav (20, Hindu) noted that he has ventured into dating, although only to go out casually once in awhile. He indicated parental approval, but only if his interactions are not serious:

I have dated a bit, and it is for the experience. I think my parents understand that, though especially in Indian culture, it is a little more conservative. My parents are OK with it for the most part, but there are a lot of restrictions.

These few examples reflect the viewpoints of the majority of youth who participated in interviews. Their experiences with dating differ from their western peer group in that most of them do not date at all during early adolescence. They may venture into dating in late adolescence and early adulthood, but they do so with a mindset that serious dating is a path towards marriage. Although at a later age they may mix and mingle with members of the opposite sex, they are quite aware of parental viewpoints as well, which remain in place regardless of age.

Romance

Along with dating comes the accompanying notion of romance, with its sentiments, deeds, emotions and desires that are meant to facilitate attachment and commitment between partners. Many youth (69%, $n = 121$) agree that romantic relationships are integral to the lives of adolescents, and that they should be able to engage in them, while 8% ($n = 14$) disagree, and 23% ($n = 41$) are unsure. Parents felt less strongly about this; 55% ($n = 74$) of parents disagree that romance is important for adolescents and would not approve of their child engaging in romantic relationships, while 25% ($n = 34$) agree and 20% ($n = 27$) are unsure that they would approve.

Indian-American parents grew up with the axiom that romance is not a strong foundation for marriage, and the cultural belief that marriage is built upon elements of compatibility as vetted by the parties involved in arranging potential partnerships. For the most part, the concept and sentiment of romance is not congruent with arranged or semi-arranged marriages as parents have known and experienced them. Conversely, their children have grown up with numerous exposures to romance and the idea of finding soul mates with whom they might share a lifetime love affair full of passion and intimacy (Coontz 2005; Trimberger 2005; DePaulo 2006).

When discussing romance within potential relationships, Rashina (17, Catholic) stated succinctly what many of the young women in this study indicated they want. Rashina said that she definitely wants romance to be part of her future serious relationship that leads to marriage:

I just want to find someone and really experience that true, head-over-heels kind of love thing. I am the hopeless romantic who wants to fall in love, be swept off her feet, and have a cute little proposal story. I really want to experience that.

Although the survey results indicate that many youth feel that romantic relationships should be allowed during adolescence, Rashina and many other youths who were interviewed in this study indicated that they desire romance, but they want it to come later, and to be an element in courtship that leads to marriage. Only one of the young women in this study disclosed that she is in a romantic relationship. Siddhi (19, Hindu) met her boyfriend when they were in high school, and they have continued their relationship through college. Siddhi did not speak openly of the romantic aspects of her relationship, although it was implied through her descriptions of an exclusive, long-term relationship with her boyfriend, who happens to be of a different race and religion.

Because her family “is more progressive,” she has been permitted to have this relationship, but not without concerns and boundaries imposed by her parents. “There are some taboos,” she stated, “and my mom is always telling me to think with your head, not with your heart.” In this context, Siddhi was referring to avoiding social drinking and sexual intimacy, and she indicated that “it’s one of those things that is pretty well understood in the family; we shouldn’t do that.”

Parents often are wary of romance, perceiving it to be a tenuous and fickle thing which lacks the substance and stability on which a lifelong commitment can be built (Coontz 2007). The adults also mentioned the emotional turmoil that comes along with dating, and they don’t want their children going through that at a time when they feel that they should be concentrating on school and future careers. Although being in a romantic relationship may be construed as “central to ‘belonging’ and status in the peer group” with positive benefits that contribute to developing maturity and relational perspective (Larson et al. 1999:6), Twenge (2014) also asserts that romantic relationships can be especially problematic for youth, because they don’t have the benefit of age and experience to develop objectivity and coping skills to get through inevitable break-ups. Parental restrictions on dating with specific boundaries and guidelines can be a buffer against a series of broken hearts. In contrast, the experiences of dating and romantic relationships with their inevitable emotional highs and lows are considered markers of development for western adolescents (Furman et al.:1999). The affective growth that results from these experiences can contribute to the development of self-esteem and self-efficacy. However, parents in this study tended to dwell more on the negative rather than positive aspects of early dating.

Several parents cited potential problems of confusion, rebellion and sneaking around if youth become involved too quickly or too early in romantic liaisons. Gehena (45, Jain) lamented that young Indian-Americans are exposed to temptations of dating and romance that are commonplace in western adolescent life:

You see something, but it is like forbidden fruit, but you are not allowed to do. I have a feeling a lot of children are going to rebel. I know kids whose parents are kind of like, you can't do this and that, and you can't date, but then you find out they are dating and doing all kinds of things. The kids are going to be very confused, especially if the parents haven't talked with them about marriage. We (she and her husband) have told our kids, you can't date. I don't think you are mature enough. I don't think you are ready and you don't need this emotional stress. One, your hormones are raging and you have no control of what is happening to your body, and two, I said mentally you are pretty naïve; you don't need the distraction. There is going to be plenty of time to deal with that later. Plenty of time to grow up and be ready for romance and a relationship. But my daughter has told me that there are a lot of kids who are sneaking around and doing these things.

Because of these and other similar concerns voiced by parents, Indian-American youth have numerous restrictions and rules to guide their social lives, which are broken down into several themes that are delineated in the following sections.

Social Life without Dating and Attendance at School Functions

In response to the question of dating and how it occurs in their social lives, youth reported various forms of restrictions that are imposed upon them regarding social interactions. They indicated that they are allowed a social life with friends of both sexes; however many parental rules are in place which are meant to control their conduct, and to regulate their interactions with the opposite sex. Most of these rules (which are addressed further in following sections) revolve around preservation of chastity, maintenance of sexual abstinence until marriage, protection of personal reputation and family name, substance use and general safety. These kinds of rules were noted by both younger and older adolescents. However once in college, there is a loosening of the reins

of parental oversight, which occurs as a byproduct of geographical distance and separation from family once children go away to school. Nonetheless, both youth and adults noted that mutual trust is a binding force between them, and it serves as the means of control through which adherence to the rules continues.

Many of the youth noted that they have been permitted to attend school functions such as dances, parties and proms. However, the caveat to their attendance in most cases was that they attend these social events with groups of friends, who may or may not be of the same sex. If they did attend with a 'date,' (meaning an escort of the opposite sex), it was not viewed by either youth or parents as going as a 'couple,' thereby implying that the relationship was platonic, with no romantic alliance existing between the two. The following remarks illustrate the majority of youths' commentary regarding what they are allowed to do in their social lives. Most of these evince a parental desire to protect children from potential forbidden activity, such as drinking, drugs and sexual encounters:

Vanya (21, Hindu) said that she was allowed to attend dances, but was well aware of her parents' expectations regarding behavior. "I knew what they expected of me, and molded myself to their expectations," she said, indicating that she wouldn't think to engage in any behaviors that might raise questions regarding cultural appropriateness or acceptability. While permitted to attend school dances and proms in high school, Salim (18, Muslim) indicated he had to be careful about sharing that information with some cousins and friends, because they were not allowed to attend. He stated, "My parents are a bit more lenient with me, because they know I am responsible and I know how to take care of myself. Some parents are extremely strict with parties and stuff like that." And although she didn't go to any of her high school proms, Anna (18, Christian N/C) shared

that she occasionally attended other school functions with groups of friends, noting, “I’m allowed to go to dances and birthday parties, but never go to any parties with alcohol. I never brought a date; we always went in groups.”

According to DasGupta and Das DasGupta, immigrant parents often display concern about their children’s “non-traditional behavior,” while “their children complain about parental strictures regarding hot topics like dating and the prom” (2002:123). These authors further state that the underlying fear of parents is related to concerns about pressure on their children to become sexually active at an early age. These fears then escalate toward the possibility “of miscegenation, in which the out-group marriage of community children will lead to cultural dilution” (2002:123). Hence, rules are put in place to control children from mingling outside of the culture, and to play their part in guarding Indian society at large from the perceived over-influence of western culture.

Parental Rules Regarding Social Interactions

Interviews with adults revealed an ardent desire to protect their children from the repercussions of what they view as much looser social attitudes and codes of conduct that exist among western adolescents. Every parent who participated in interviews indicated keen awareness of the permeation of sex in western culture, as well as discomfort with the allurements of overt sexual temptation that is depicted daily across various forms of media. Emerging from many conversations with parents about dating is a desire and duty to protect their children from the perceived temptations of a permissive society, and an obligation to preserve the values of chastity and purity, particularly for girls. DasGupta and Das DasGupta add that “autonomous sexual behavior is indicative of a certain level of assimilation into mainstream American culture,” and furthermore, that the burdens of

sexual chastity and cultural tradition, are placed on the shoulders of Indian-American daughters (2002:124).

The perception of excessive permissiveness in the western world of dating coupled with the sometimes overblown conclusion that dating can be fraught with casual sex, excessive drinking or substance abuse, may lead to a sense of moral panic among adults. However, parents in the study did not indicate that level of alarm, but nonetheless they are clearly cognizant of possibilities for their children to deviate from behavioral boundaries which they set forth. The boundaries are meant to protect their children, as well as to safeguard them from transgressions that threaten both the image and reality of maintaining decorum within Indian culture. Parents in this study were keen to discuss various rules they had about the types of social functions their children could attend, as well as curfews, driving, drinking, substance use and sexual contact.

Mothers of pre-teen boys, both Rewa (36, Christian N/C) and Jeyati (36, Hindu) expressed discomfort with what they feel is an overly-sexualized culture in America. "Friendship is spoiled here," stated Jeyati. "With the ideas of 'friends with benefits' and sleeping around, it seems there is nothing that's off limits." Rewa reflected similar concerns; in trying to understand the concept of dating in America, she questioned exactly what dating means. "What is dating here, really? You cannot just jump in bed with every person you see; those relationships are not going to last. We really have to know the meaning of dating, what is typical and what is not."

While discussing potential dating rules for her three children, Vanita (36, Hindu) noted that "until they are at 18, maybe more, I want to know where they are going, and who they are with, and exactly what they are doing." Shaira (45, Hindu) succinctly stated

what many parents expressed regarding fear of early physical intimacy. She said, “There shouldn’t be physical contact between them. They are too young to understand this.

Crushes are OK, but don’t take it any further.” Stan (62, Christian/NC) summed up the sentiments of many parents regarding sleep-overs and drinking:

I told them, no sleep-overs; if you have to sleep over, do it here. And I forbid going out with boys in a car; no going out alone and creating problems. And no need to drink; try it with me if you must; I allow that so there is no need to experiment outside.

Every adolescent and young adult who participated in interviews also expressed clear understanding of the social parameters set forth by their parents. Very animated discussions took place about these issues and most youth stated that they abide by the rules. Rutika (17, Hindu) said, “I can’t sleep out anywhere. I have to be in the house by 11.” Shilpa (15, Hindu) stated that parental rules for her include “no sleepovers, because Indians don’t do that; parents are uncomfortable with it.” Kopal (17, Hindu) and Radhav (16, Jain) explained that their parents bluntly told them to wait for sex until marriage, and don’t do drugs of any kind. Prema (18, Hindu) indicated that her parents absolutely forbid drinking, smoking, sleepovers and premarital sex. “There is no question at all,” she said, “these are the rules; I absolutely can’t do it.” However, in reference to premarital sex she also added, “I know many girls who have broken the rules, but it’s not necessary. Why do that? It’s not necessary at all to do that in order to be in a relationship with somebody; everybody can have self-control.”

Comments from both Chintav (20, Hindu) and Ketav (20, Hindu) reveal that parents also are communicating the same sexual boundaries to sons. Chintav stated,

We are not supposed to have sex before marriage; it’s like a sacred thing you should do only after you are married. There is also no PDA (public displays of affection), which I know over here is quite common, but in Indian culture it is fairly rare. There are limits.

Echoing this, Ketav said that his parents expect virginity until marriage, “even though kids are having sex; a lot is hidden.” Although these young men were clear about parental boundaries regarding sexual activity, they did not report the same set of specific rules regarding curfews, sleep-overs or drinking as the young women indicated were in place for them, likely reflecting the greater emphasis upon control of females’ behavior.

Rashina (17, Catholic) described her observations of the young adult social scene as “crazy, with parties everywhere,” though she distinguished herself as one who doesn’t participate in these, and “not the kind of person to drink.” Maira portrays the Indian-American party scene in the New York metro area not far from Rashina’s home, as a significant component of the youth culture for Indian-American youth, in which they create “ethnic as well as racial and gender ideologies” (2002:12). In these settings, Indian-American youth deviate from parental expectations of behavior through their personal interactions and style of dress:

They gather in cliques and couples, the women attired in slinky club wear (tight fitting shirts and hip-hugger pants or miniskirts) and the men in hip-hop inspired urban street fashion (the signature Tommy Hilfiger shirts and baggy pants), or in jackets and slacks if required. This subculture helps produce a notion of what it means to be ‘cool,’ for a young person in New York. (Maira 2002:12)

Jain (2008) recounts a similar night club social scene frequented by young Indians in many major metropolitan areas, not only in New York City, but also in London and Delhi. Although Rashina is aware that it exists in her area, she also added her reluctance to participate:

I think it’s there, but I think that is all the college kids going crazy because they got their freedom after high school. I am not interested in that kind of stuff. I hear plenty of stories and those stories don’t make me want to go there; they make me want to stay away. I don’t want to be a story that is being told to someone.

Whether or not any other youth in this study participate in this activity is unknown, as none reported going to night clubs as part of their social experience. Again, that is not to say it does not exist, but it is information which may be kept on the “DL (down low)” so as not to create impressions about their behavior that may be perceived as undesirable or judged harshly by others (Shankar 2008:23).

Some of the adult participants also raised a parallel concern about the influence of the western culture of sexual freedom seeping into India. They expressed bewilderment about how to reconcile their personal beliefs and values about the private and sacred aspects of sex that each generation has been taught, with what appears to be a shifting sexual landscape in their homeland. Gehena (45, Jain) travels at least once a year to India to visit family, and detailed observations which have surprised her:

When I go to India now, I actually get a culture shock when I go to my own country! They are a lot more loose with their morals than we are! India is a sexually oppressed country and I think because the Westerners are not, the Eastern culture has picked them out to be these heathens who do whatever they want, which is not true in reality. In India because they are actually oppressed, it is done under the covers [literally and figuratively], which is worse, because there also is a lot of incest or rape, or whatever, that goes on.

Gupta’s response to Gehena may be that “the India in the memory of the first generation is dramatically different from the reality of India as the 21st century approaches” (1999b:122). She explains that it’s becoming more difficult “to preserve social values that were present in India when they were growing up, forgetting that India itself has changed” (1999b:122). Gupta suggests that the “parental generation puts a great deal of pressure on second generation women to maintain expected ideals of behavior” that now are often outdated in modernized urban India (1999b:122). In Gupta’s opinion, the second generation will face more complex challenges as they try to “reconcile the culture

their parents are passing on to them” with the current realities of modern India, in order “to find their own unique niche” (1999b:122). For Indian-American youth, these challenges are doubly rooted in the India their parents still cherish but left behind, and in the realities of modern life in America.

Age Limitations on Dating

Both parents and youth indicated that dating should be deferred until early adulthood because of maturity and distraction factors. Parents especially noted that they felt their adolescent and young adult children were not ready to handle the responsibilities that come with dating. Expressing the paternal point of view, Nirvash (42, Jain) said, “Kids are not mature enough, even in high school. It’s not the right time for it.” Stan, (62, Christian/NC), echoed his agreement regarding the guidelines he gives to his 18-year-old daughter: “I tell her she’s not ready to talk about boys, and don’t jump into anything; there’s plenty of time for that later. Get your education first.”

All the mothers who were interviewed expressed similar views. Although they allow their children to participate in social and school functions, they feel that the notions of dating and romance are best left to a later, more mature time in the lives of their children, preferably not starting until the college years, and even then, the emphasis is on completing studies before becoming seriously involved with a partner. The comments of Reeva (44, Hindu), who is parent to Sabita (17, Hindu), are representative of many of the mothers:

I keep telling her at this age it is OK to have a crush on some people; to like some people even, but I don’t know whether you have to act upon it because I feel like being in love or committing to something so early is a huge burden. And I tell her it is nice to have a lot of friends and to hang out, but I don’t know if you want to have an emotional commitment to one person. I wish she wouldn’t take on that burden too

early because I want her to experience life. Then later on, make the choice; maybe in four more years, but not so early.

Sabita indicated that she follows the advice of her mother: “I go out with friends; I hang out with friends mostly. I go to school functions; I go to the proms, but I don’t go looking for a date; I just go with the group.” She elaborated that dating is something that will come later in life:

I want to go to college and look at it a growing experience. I don’t know who I am yet. I want to use college as time to figure that out. From there, I will start looking into dating and finding a potential spouse. For now, it’s about finding out who I am. At this point in life, dating doesn’t make sense.

Several other youth reiterated the age guidelines set forth by parents. Rena’s (16, Hindu) comments are indicative of what many youth expressed about starting to date at a young age:

Being a 16-year-old, I still consider myself a kid. I think dating right now is so stupid; it doesn’t even make sense. What, are you going to marry the person you are dating in your sophomore year; are you kidding me? I think that is so stupid, dating during school. Right now your age is to get educated and learn and that kind of thing. I think that is what is important.

These comments raise the question of how Indian-American parents view the developmental trajectory of their offspring. It seems that there is a compartmentalization of beliefs about milestones of achievement, with the necessity of completing education and beginning a career coming before meaningful experience in the dating world, which then inevitably will be followed by marriage (because single life is viewed as highly undesirable, which is addressed in a later chapter). Indian-American youth seem to be socialized to follow this path, which partially may be driven by the parental belief that youth are not fully capable of handling their emotions or youthful romantic passions while concurrently working to achieve academic and career success. If parents believe

that romantic involvement is best left to adulthood, this can be especially problematic for youth who have aspirations to enter professions which require extended schooling that will take them into their mid-to-late twenties, and perhaps require them to live singly and away from family for several years. This difference in parental beliefs is a striking contrast between Indian-American youth and their western counterparts.

Dating as Distraction and as Discernment

One of the biggest concerns of adults in this study regarding dating and romantic entanglements is that these can cause immense distraction for youth, and negatively impact them in ways that can be harmful to their emotional well-being as well as their abilities to concentrate on academics and other extra-curricular activities. Emotions related to romantic relationships can be a frequent source of positive, euphoric feelings as well as deep anguish and distress, which can lead to anxiety and feelings of sadness (Collins 2003; Larson et al.1999). Orpinas, Horn, Song, Reeves and Hsieh (2013) found that early romantic involvement is linked with lower academic performance and academic failure; additionally, emotional problems may precede or become a consequence of dating, which interferes with positive educational experiences. They also note that time spent with a romantic partner may result in less time for studying, which has a direct effect on academic achievement, and in less time with friends, which can cause conflict and depression. Differences in expectations between boys and girls particularly related to sexuality and commitment also may be a source of significant emotional conflict. Brown, Feiring and Furman note that adolescence and early adulthood are times of deep and diverse emotions, and romantic relationships most poignantly “reflect the euphoria and the despair of this stage of life” (1999:14). These

scholars also state that “few phenomena have as profound an impact on the young person, both in the immediate and long term” (1999:14). Parents in this study recognize all of these factors and believe they have the potential to distract and potentially cause distress. However, parents did not at any point in discussions verbalize the possible positive effects of dating during adolescence. As Brown et al. further note, adolescent romantic relationships provide a vehicle through which adolescents “may also be learning relational patterns that influence the course of subsequent relationships, perhaps even marriages” (1999:5). They add that dating may help adolescents “work through issues of identity, individuation and other components of self-concept” (1999:5). Nonetheless, it seems that adults in this study have a limited view of dating, focusing more on the possible negative outcomes rather than on any positive influences.

Most parents were insistent that their children focus on their education, particularly while in high school, indicating awareness that romantic relationships not only cause conflicting emotions, but they “may jeopardize competing interests such as friendship networks, career goals or extracurricular activities” (Diamond, Savin-Williams and Dubé 1999:200). Even when attending college, parents felt that academic achievement and career planning need to be the primary areas of focus, although they also noted that later college years may be an appropriate time to think about dating. Diamond et al. (1999) report that some parents view romantic relationships as a hindrance to, rather than a mark of full maturity, and hence discourage romantic relationships until educational plans have been completed and the youth’s career path is underway. However at that point, Indian-American parents think that dating should be for the purpose of mate selection, and not just for the sake of socializing. Most parents asserted that if their children engaged in an

exclusive one-to-one relationship with a member of the opposite sex, then there should be assumption and intent that they are moving toward a marriage commitment. Both parents and youth questioned why time and effort should be put into a dating relationship if it is not leading to marriage. Their observations of patterns of meeting up, building a relationship and then breaking up, hence causing emotional turmoil and mental preoccupation, lead both generations to wonder about the worth and meaning of the practice.

Larson et al. (1999) discussed Larson's trip to India, during which she learned about Indian viewpoints on dating, and included her observations in the construction of her theoretical framework:

Many Indian developmental scholars look critically on American adolescents for the large distraction and disruption that romantic relationships create in their lives. In India, even most college students have remarkably little interaction with the other sex, and this arrangement is justified as allowing teens to devote more of their psychic energies to the business of learning and development . . . The belief of our Indian colleagues that romantic emotions – particularly distress – disrupt the schoolwork of American adolescents is a plausible hypothesis . . . Because of the strong and powerful feelings they generate, romantic relationships deserve to be identified as the single largest source of stress for adolescents. (1999:20, 34-35)

Shilpa (15, Hindu) has aspirations to become a psychiatrist, and she shared how she and her father discuss her future, which doesn't include dating until she is nearly finished medical school. At that point, they agree that she will date with the goal of marriage in mind:

Shilpa: We've actually talked about it, and my dad doesn't want me dating until I'm able to stand on my own two feet, but he also doesn't want me to just get arranged to someone I don't know.

Dianne: So he would prefer that you date?

Shilpa: Yeah, after I have a set track of where I'm going. Right now he doesn't want me to date.

Dianne: Tell me about the ‘track.’

Shilpa: I want to be a psychiatrist; that’s my own decision. So after I get into medical college is when I can start being interested in who I want to marry. Because until then, this is what my dad tells me: Say for example, I was dating someone and say I broke up with them right before finals. And then that’s the only thing I’m thinking about when I’m taking my finals, and so then I do bad on my finals as a result of something that I could have just avoided. . . So my dad doesn’t want to talk about this now. He’s like, when you get to that age, then we’ll talk about it, because he doesn’t want me thinking about boys right now.

Sonya (19, Christian/NC) discussed the emotional turmoil of early dating and romance, which was cited by several of the youth as something that would cause unnecessary complication and hindrance in their busy lives, which revolve around academic pursuits and achievements, and extra-curricular school activities such as sports, music, dance and various clubs, as well as church or temple related social and educational events.

Obviously people are dating and that is how people get married here. Girls spend a lot of time making sure that they look good, and that they are saying the right things, and I think it is kind of crazy. What people do to get a guy is really kind of crazy. I don’t think people at my age should be dating, even in high school. My best friend has had five or six different boyfriends so far. I feel so bad because every time she goes through a breakup it is awful. I feel like that is not necessary to put yourself through something like that, more than once too... That is what happens, a lot of people get involved and it gets too serious and personally, I think 19 is too young to get too serious.

Representative of sentiments expressed by several other parents are from Annada (37, Hindu), who is the divorced mother of a pre-teen boy:

I don’t know anybody who has let their children do that while in school; in college years, I have seen some, but in general, I don’t think Indian parents want their children to date in school. If you date, it should be with the idea that marriage is in mind . . . Here, people break up and within a couple of months they start dating again; I find that a little strange. Dating in this country is not necessarily geared toward marriage, but as a teenager, I would discourage him (her son) from dating. I feel if children get involved in dating so early, it hurts their careers and education. I feel that is something that should come a little later in life.

Expressing a somewhat different observation, Shaira (45, Hindu) suggested that early dating is common in America because young people have pressure to find their own partners without family assistance. Yet she also feels that dating is a distraction to academic and career success if it occurs too soon:

I think one of the reasons Indian kids maybe don't feel the pressure to date is because a lot of American kids have this pressure of having to find a partner themselves. This whole idea of falling back on what parents would do to help doesn't exist for a lot of western kids. So if they don't date - I know I have talked to moms who are like, I hope my daughter or my son finds a boyfriend or girlfriend in high school - they think it is a window of opportunity that is lost. So the teenagers feel that pressure and the parents feel that pressure, which Indian kids don't have. In a way that is great, because they always have the fallback option of, my parents will arrange a marriage for me if I can't find somebody. . . All of our families are so focused on education; for years I am telling her (daughter), you need to focus and study. . . I have told my daughter that she should keep her options open but not get into anything serious unless she is really sure, and education is at least nearly done.

And while dating is considered an exercise in discernment towards marriage, the idea of prolonging dating for years at a time raises questions regarding intent and goals.

Although Gupta notes that "dating proceeds at a slower pace in Indian-American relationships," she states that dating "implies an understanding that this relationship will lead to marriage" (1999b:132). The comments of both adults and youth on this topic suggest that parents seem to feel that a singular dedication to studies and school activities is most desirable during adolescence and early adulthood. It appears that parents don't think a wide variety of social experiences with members of the opposite sex is either advantageous or necessary for their children, nor do they acknowledge the benefits or learning experiences that may result from dating during this important developmental period. It seems that parents may be more concerned about children being swept away by impulses or emotions, and they worry about difficulty youth may encounter in controlling

their responses, which can be disruptive to the mindset of academic achievement.

Sam and Mary George are an Indian-American Christian couple in their mid 40's and authors of *Before the Wedding Bells* (2010). During an interview at their Chicago home, they pointed out the cultural incongruities that Indian-American youth experience when faced with dating decisions. Although dating is supposed to be intended as preparation for marriage, nonetheless they indicate that youth also are caught up in the western practices of dating for social pleasure and sexual gratification.

Mary: There is no dating or any prolonged dating like the American system is built on. You still have a lot of boundaries even if you are advertising yourself . . . Then you have certain dates and times in which you say yes or no . . . They know when you are talking to each other, it is for marriage; that is very clear.

Sam: I think about the idea that they (Indian-American youth) are caught up in some way with the culture here; there is a divide about dating; dating is just hanging out, having some fun, whatever it is when I am in college. It doesn't associate directly with marriage . . . In some cases it will go deeply and emotionally, and with sexual involvement . . . It is just part of college life; no parents knowing about it. They don't have any obligation and their parents have no obligation. I may be with one guy or girl today and I'm with somebody else next week; that is very common . . . But by the time I come to senior year in college and graduate school, parents put on pressure, so then now I think about marriage, now I need to think about who do I need to see to go about dating and courtship. That kind of conversation begins when parents start pressuring.

Siddhi (19, Hindu) explained that she felt a lot of pressure once she began dating, and that it took a lot of convincing for her grandparents to understand why she is dating. She indicated that "they are just now getting the hang of it." She reported that "they are OK with it now" because her boyfriend (who is not Indian), "respects my grandparents in the same way I do, and that is what they really care about now." Siddhi also had difficulty in overcoming her parents' objections to a prolonged dating relationship, especially while she still is in school:

My parents would say, 'Why?' They only knew each other for a week before getting

married and they are the happiest people I have ever seen. They are so happy in their marriage. I am shocked. How can you be sure in a week? That is one big difference. My Mom asks, 'Why do you need to date someone for five years? I don't know how it works like that.' That is probably a big difference in our family, our generations.

Although Siddhi is fairly sure that this relationship will lead to marriage, it is her first experience with dating, and both she and her boyfriend have several more years of schooling ahead, since each of them plans to go to graduate school. "We'll see," she said wistfully, but both her parents and grandparents expect that since she is investing so much time in the relationship, marriage is the logical and anticipated next step.

Dating Choices and Family Reputation

Adults and youth share parallel concerns regarding the effect of their dating patterns and eventual marriage choices on themselves and their families. Both groups expressed a fear of gossip within the Indian community if youth breached the unspoken social and behavioral codes of conduct imposed by their families and closely knit communities regarding relating with the opposite sex. Missteps can result in problems not only for the offending youth, but also for the entire family. Parents may be criticized for not keeping tighter control on their children, with particular emphasis placed on controlling females (Gupta 1999b; DasGupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Shankar 2008). Both Maira (2002) and Shankar (2008) noted in their studies that a girl's indiscretions could jeopardize marriage prospects not only for themselves but for siblings as well. Maira asserts that "maintaining a family's good name is "of paramount importance in arranging a marriage," and parents are well aware of the "heavy responsibility to keep their daughters', and thus the family's name untarnished" (2002:160), thereby reinforcing the position of women as the "keepers of purity, chastity and virginity" (Shankar 2008:170).

Many young Indian-Americans complain that fears of gossip and community meddling are means to justify the regulation of social activities that parents impose (Khandelwal 2002). Youth also may engage in their own peer policing both inside and outside of school, and contribute to the powerful social force of gossip that can make or break reputations (Shankar 2008). Dread of gossip can make youth think carefully about their actions in school and in the community, as well as whom they can trust (Gupta 1999b; Khandelwal 2000; Shankar 2008).

Youth are cognizant that their choices regarding dating and eventual marriage reflect upon themselves and their families. While 59% (n = 104) agree that their choices in this regard have an impact on their families as well as themselves, 28% (n = 49) disagree and 13% (n = 23) are unsure about this. Parents leaned toward agreeing with this as well, with 46% (n = 62) of them feeling that their child's choices about dating and marriage reflect upon them and the family, while 28% (n = 38) disagree, and 26% (n = 35) are unsure.

The few adult females in this study who disclosed that they dated before marriage indicated high awareness that if their dating activities became known in their social circles or neighborhoods, there would be no question of having to marry the boys they were seeing. If they were found to be socializing with the males without intent of marriage, it would be a very negative reflection upon themselves as well as their families. These women also reported feeling anxious about what others might say that could affect their reputations. Adult males also expressed awareness of this, as well as concern for their female partners. Rewa (36, Christian/NC) pointed out the need for accountability

once a relationship has been established, in light of the potential effect on a woman's reputation. While discussing her son, she noted,

I don't want him taking relationships as something you can throw away. I want him to be a very responsible young man who has to be accountable for his actions. I don't want him to grow up as person who thinks he can get away with anything. The Indian community talks a lot among themselves; they can be judgmental.

Continuing her discussion of dating, Sabita (17, Hindu) indicated that she was quite conscious of the need to have a firm grasp on personal limits. Though she is aware that any indiscretions may negatively affect her family's reputation, she also expressed knowledge that her choices require using good judgment and that they should be in alignment with parental trust and expectation:

Even ourselves, we know we all want to have a bright future; we all want to do certain things with our lives; we know that not only will our family be shamed by our bad action, but we also will. We have both our family and our best interests in mind . . . Well, I think the way we were brought up, our parents put a lot of faith in us and they trust us to make the right decisions. I think we do their job justice because we don't do things that would bring shame to our family . . . Of course there are certain rules that we follow; but mostly, in terms of social life and dating, it is basically our decision and we use our own discretion making those choices.

Similarly, Rashina (17, Catholic) carefully considers the social choices she makes, based on parental admonitions to be careful of her associations with the opposite sex. Rashina does not date yet, but stated that she takes her parents' cautions to heart:

Well, I have not actually dated anyone, but I talk to my parents a lot about it. They just said, 'nice Indian boy' . . . They always said just look out for who you go with and make sure they are a good person, because down the line if you want to go into a career that's in the public eye (because I do want to pursue politics), certain decisions may come back to haunt you.

Rashina shared additional points that are representative of many of the female comments on this topic. She explained that being a girl in general "is different," and their reputations are more at stake than those of males should they deviate from what is

considered acceptable behavior in the Indian culture. She also highlights the concern that in tight Indian communities, information often is exchanged as a matter of course, which can become important later in vetting processes when youth come of age to marry:

Generally girls are a lot more protected, especially in the Indian community because Staten Island is very small, and people do talk, especially when it comes to girls getting married, and you don't want to have that reputation of 'oh my son can't marry her because she has such a reputation of being a party girl.' You hear that stuff all the time and I don't want to be one of those stories.

Candid comments from Prabir (17, Hindu) reveal his admission to doing some things that risk parental disapproval, but nonetheless, he is appreciative of the amount of trust his parents have in him. He seems aware of limits and states that he hasn't crossed a line of behavior that may result in damage to his family's reputation:

I really admire how much trust they (parents) put in me. The bottom line is I have done stupid things before, but the way I justify some of the things is that I've never done anything that is really dumb, that ruins my life; ruins other people; hurts other people; causes shame to the family or causes me to lose something valuable.

With light shed upon parental rules and restrictions, and youths' understanding of and cooperation with them, each group then was asked additional questions about parental authority to control children's behavior, as well as about their forays into deviating from the rules through experimentation with dating.

Parental Control on Youth Behavior and Dating

Parents inclined to agree (52%, $n = 70$) that they have legitimate authority to control their children's interactions with the opposite sex; however 35% ($n = 47$) disagree, and 13% ($n = 18$) are not sure. However, youth were more inclined to disagree (54%, $n = 95$) that their parents have legitimate authority to control their interactions with members of the opposite sex, but 30% ($n = 53$) of youth did agree with this, while 16% ($n = 28$) are unsure. This survey question did not differentiate age of youth, though it is likely that the

expectation and acceptance of parental control over behaviors varies by age. Most significant among comments from youth regarding this question is that females spoke repeatedly and concertedly about the fact that males have more freedom of movement and action than females. While both male and female youth indicated disparity in rules for socializing, females were very vocal in their observations that males are judged less, supervised less, and generally given far more freedom and leniency than the female youth in matters of social interaction and accountability for their social lives. As previously mentioned, this exerted control on girls is tied to concerns about maintaining sexual purity, and girls' behavior is monitored much more closely than that of their male counterparts, according to the youth in this study. This finding also has been documented in other studies of Indian-American youth (Gupta 1999b; Rangaswamy 2000; Maira 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Shankar 2008).

Siya (21, Other religion) relayed a story about her family that caused her to feel resentment and to question the gender disparity regarding parental control of her and her siblings:

They found out that my brother was dating but they didn't do anything about it. For my sister, they flipped out that she was even flirting with someone. Another time she was just talking to this person in high school who was asking her about something academically oriented, but they misconstrued that and they interrogated her. With my brother, it seems to be kind of different. They are really loose with all the rules with him. I am personally offended by that because when I even talk to a male or they see me even talking to a male, they make me feel like I am committing some huge crime.

Adam (19, Catholic) confirmed that his parents are more permissive with him "because I'm the boy;" he continued, "They are a lot more lenient about rules and what I could do, and what my sisters could do. They are a lot more strict with them, even though they are older." Siddhi (19, Hindu) discussed gender imbalances with rules in her

family too. Because she is the oldest daughter, she reported that her parents have requirements for her that don't apply to her male cousin, who also lives in their joined family household:²¹

Being a girl, I have more rules. My parents want to know exactly where I am versus my cousin; it doesn't really matter; he can go wherever he wants. But for me, it's because I am a girl! I don't know why. My Dad has never really told me but he is always saying, 'Worse things can happen to you versus your cousins' . . . It's really annoying.

The comments of youth here once again portray the primary concern of curbing, checking and controlling female sexuality. As chastity is the prized virtue for girls, parental anxiety about any potential damage to it results in reiteration of rules that are gendered in nature and that emphasize female responsibility in upholding reputations (Shankar 2008; Maira 2002). Parents' comments are just as clear in illustrating this point.

Reeva (44, Hindu) stated, "I just want to be in control at this age because I don't know who she might want to go on a date with." Chandak (39, Hindu), father of two boys, stated that there "definitely is less discipline restrictions on boys," while Raizel (53, Christian, N/C) noted that "there are certain lines you should not cross, because it is girls who suffer in the end." She further stated, "There are rules and regulations to obey and to protect them." Vanita (36, Hindu), parent of an adolescent son and two younger daughters, felt that having too many restrictions may impair communication between parents and children, but she also indicated that rules would in place for her daughters:

²¹ A joined family arrangement is one in which extended family members live together in the same household. Typically the oldest males are blood relatives, and the women are mothers, wives and daughters bound by the common relationship; however there can be variations in arrangements. Traditional joined families are still common in rural India but have disappeared for the most part in urban India (Singh 2010).

For my daughters, I want to put little rules in from the beginning; so that by the rules, they understand that you cannot just go with anybody without knowing them, without loving them truly, without getting love back; so on that point, definitely for my daughters I am going to be strict on rules . . . I can't imagine dating, then breaking, then dating another one, then breaking, then dating. So on that point, I will have restrictions on my daughters that whoever you are seeing, take your time to get to know them; if possible, marry that guy too, if he's a nice guy. I am going to be a little harder on my daughters.

These parents reiterate concerns of Indian parents found in other studies (Gupta1999b; Leonard 1999; DasGupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Rangaswamy 2000; Maria 2002; Shankar 2008). Concern for daughters and protecting them from what is interpreted as threats to their chastity and reputations keeps parents on high alert throughout adolescence and early adulthood.

Dating Experimentation

Despite parental rules, monitoring and control, youth nonetheless find ways to push the boundaries of expected behavior, and deviate from the rules and regulations set forth by their elders. These digressions may revolve around choosing a person to date who parents would not approve because they don't fit into the mold that parents envisage for their child, or engaging in sexual conduct, which in turn causes great anxiety for parents, as mentioned previously.

Though Prabir (17, Hindu) would consider the opportunity to date outside of his culture, he strongly stated that he wants to marry an Indian woman. He said, "I am open to dating other people but not marry them; to explore and to learn new people as part of life, but definitely not marry someone who is not Indian." Mohita (20, Hindu) confessed to dating a Muslim boy for a short time, even though she knew that it would not be accepted within her family:

I used to date an Indian, but he is Muslim and I am Hindu. At the time I didn't think religion was that big of a deal. It didn't work out for various reasons, but towards the end I remember that his last words were, "Oh, but you are Hindu, what were we thinking?" . . . Now, when I look back on things and think about it, religion does play a big role in who you can be with.

In contrast to these comments, are Niketh's (18, Hindu) views on experimenting with dating. Before speaking with Niketh, I completed a lengthy interview with his mother, who specifically stated that she did not want her children to date outside of their Indian cultural or religious heritage; she was clear that her son and her daughters should date only Indians, and only Hindus. Nonetheless, Niketh's remarks indicate a discordant position:

It is apparently somewhat shameful when you are in the community if you date or marry anybody but Indian. I am currently dating a White girl . . . We are sexually exclusive with one another . . . Religion doesn't mean anything to me, because she is Christian . . . But I don't think it is really as big of a deal to my parents to marry Indian. I do see a problem with that and I'm probably not going to listen to them. I'm interested in true love.

Niketh is the only participant in the study who spoke openly, with a bit of swagger, of his sexual experience. He communicated this, as well as other personal details of his life, with what appeared at times to purposely try to elicit a reaction from me. He was not privy to his mother's comments in her interview, as the sessions took place at different times, in separate rooms of their home. Though I initially questioned if he was exaggerating his experiences, apparently that was not the case as he continued to share other aspects of his social life, which he said also included experimenting with alcohol and marijuana.

Anna (18, Christian/NC) shared a story about getting into a lot of trouble for becoming briefly involved with someone on whom she had a big crush:

It's a very complicated thing of the past. My Mom somehow found out; mothers always know; so, I was in shock and I felt extremely awkward. It was my first kiss, essentially. I don't really know how she found out because I didn't write about it or anything. She always just knows. I was threatened till time eternity.

The contrast of these two stories is striking in their illustration of the large gender gap that exists between the teenage male and female accounts of their experiences with experimentation. Niketh reported no parental repercussions of his current dating situation, and mistakenly assumes that it doesn't bother his parents. On the other hand, Anna was quite impressed by the reaction of her mother about a first kiss, which she later said scared her into thinking that she better not do something like that again. The discrepancies of reaction appear to be informed more by gender expectations and less by differences in religion or family backgrounds.

Behavioral experimentation related to dating and interacting with the opposite sex is easily aided by access to numerous forms of communication devices that were not available to parents during their adolescence and early adulthood. These communication tools are compelling forces in the lives of youth, and present another navigational challenge for them in terms of use within parental boundaries. These tools as well as the influences of assorted forms of social media are addressed in the next section.

Influence of Various Forms of Media

The multitudinous types of media that youth are exposed to on a daily basis often are filled with excessive and graphic sexual content, which encourage irresponsible sexual activity and suggest to adolescents that premarital and extramarital sexual relations with multiple partners is acceptable (Twenge 2014; Shankar 2008; Brown and Hayes 2001; Brown, Childers and Waszak 1990). One needs only to look at the lineup of programming on television on any given day of the week, and choose from numerous

shows which promote casual sexual activity, a hookup culture, and an emphasis on self-gratification. Reality programs such as *The Bachelor*, *Girls Gone Wild* and *16 and Pregnant*,²² and network shows with suggestive titles such as *Mistresses* and *Scandal*²³ are shown in prime time slots, and often display unrestrained sex that takes place without the framework of courtship, dating, romance or deep emotional connection. In summarizing data gathered across several different types of media, Ward affirms that “sexual references and imagery are quite prevalent and have been increasing in number and explicitness since the 1970s” (2003:359). She further adds that “this content frequently treats women as sexual objects, upholds the sexual double standard, and glamorizes non-relational or unmarried sex while giving minimal attention to married sex or sexual planning” (2003:359). The messages that result from this can be conflicting “especially for young women, who are encouraged to be sexually attractive yet not too sexually active, and are informed that ‘everyone is doing it,’ but are cautioned about ‘reputations’ and pregnancy risks with little concrete information about prevention” (2003:359-360).

Additionally, youth can connect with all kinds of pornography with a click on their computers or other mobile devices. As Twenge points out, “The most striking shift in teenage and twenty-somethings’ sexual behavior in the last decade is the disconnect between sex and emotional involvement” (2014:215). With such pervasive exposure to a sexually saturated media environment, today’s youth are confronted with how to process these messages, as well as how to integrate any influence they may have on the development of attitudes and values regarding dating, marriage and family. Indian-

²² These are titles of current popular reality shows airing on network television.

²³ These are titles of fictional shows currently airing on network television.

American youth have the added challenge of analyzing and synthesizing these exposures through the lens of cultural stipulations that limit discussion of sexual topics as well as frown upon anything with overt sexual overtones.

Steyer summarily states the effect on youth of media messages that bombard and desensitize them daily with sexual language, messages and images: It is “a force that is shaping their reality, setting their expectations, guiding their behavior, defining their self-image and dictating their interests, choices, and values” (2002:7). Though this may be true to some extent, this author does not present evidence to support an increase in sexual behavior among youth as a direct result of the influence of media. As previously noted (Child Trends Data Bank 2015 report), there has been a decrease in sexual activity (specifically sexual intercourse) among teens in the last two decades.

Nonetheless, the participants in this study acknowledged that forms of media (such as television, movies, the Internet and social networking sites) highly influence their perceptions about dating, marriage and family. Both youth (52%, $n = 92$) and adults (58%, $n = 78$) tended to agree with this, while 29% ($n = 51$) of youth and 17% of adults ($n = 23$) disagree, and 19% ($n = 33$) of youth and 25% ($n = 34$) of adults are unsure about the influence of media. Several of the youth commented on the early exposure to sexual themes that young people experience in America. As Chintav (20, Hindu) stated,

I would say that the biggest influence is probably the media, technology, movies, stuff like that. People are exposed to very sexual themes at a very young age, whereas when I was growing up, I didn't have that exposure until late middle school. So a lot of people know about these themes at a much younger age, and they think they are more at liberty to take steps without really understanding the repercussions that it has. I think that also leads to a lack of trust between people.

Anna (18, Christian) noted that more suggestive sexual themes have crept into Bollywood productions as well, which are a large component of popular culture enjoyed

by Indian youth. Although these films may not have as blatant sexual scenes as those which appear in western movies and television, nonetheless these images have an influence on teenage perceptions of love and sex:

Indian movies, in the beginning, they never had kissing scenes. Now they do, which is weird because you never associate such things in Indian movies. I remember whenever there was a kissing scene on a movie; my parents would cover up my eyes. But I've seen it; I'm OK with it. My Mom always says, 'Anna, change that; I don't like watching stuff like that.' You can see the difference. I don't agree with it, but it is what it is. It is definitely influencing.

Fathers were especially vocal about opinions regarding the influence of media on their children. Girvan (62, Hindu) and Stan (62, Hindu), both fathers of college-age daughters, consider media influences to be detrimental to instilling positive values about dating and marriage. Girvan said, "It's a big thing now; there's always worry about what they see and hear." Stan opined similarly that what is seen on television is not the reality he wants his daughters to follow. "I don't mince words with them," he said; "I'm very firm about telling them not to do like that." Nirvash (42, Jain), father of twin tween boys and an adolescent daughter, expressed dismay at the constant barrage of sexual messages to which youth are exposed:

It is TV, the movies; they see people going through relationship issues; they are dating and all of this stuff, like experimenting with sexual relationships; it puts the wrong foundation into children and that keeps progressing; they don't understand what that really means.

While both youth and adults acknowledge that media content is rife with sexual content and that it has the potential to exert negative influence, there was little conversation of intergenerational conflict that may result from consumption or interpretations of sexually explicit media narratives. Discussions on this topic focused mainly upon awareness of sexual content in media and the fact of undeniable influence,

rather than how this influence contributes to the construction or expression of adolescent sexual identity.

Communication and Self-Expression through Mobile Devices and Social Media

Today's youth have grown up with unprecedented proliferation in technology and social media that is easily accessible to them, and also provides them with multiple ways and opportunities to connect with others both locally and globally. They live in a world of Smartphones, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and SnapChat, which provide wide scope for both intimate and casual connection. They have immediate access to people, products and information content that can be enticing, fascinating and provocative to unsophisticated or immature youth, who perhaps may not yet possess the experience or knowledge to screen or filter these. Teens and young adults also "attest to the value of instant messaging, email, paging and the telephone for keeping their social lives on the DL (down low)" as Shankar states, and these activities often present challenges for their parents to consistently monitor their interactions (2008:181).

The ubiquitous use of mobile communication devices and social media is a fact of modern life not only for youth, but also for many adults too. The difference between the two is that youth have grown up in a hi-tech media intensive environment with the use of these tools for daily living and for connecting with others, while adults have had to adjust to changing the way they communicate, which has evolved drastically from their own youthful days. For this generation of youth, "silence is nonexistent; they are connected all day long to one form of media or another" according to Arnett (2015:194). While adults indicate that they may sometimes wonder how they managed without the convenience of mobile devices, they also are aware of potential dangers associated with

them and hence are alert and cautious regarding their children's use of these. As Nidha (44, Hindu) said, "It's hard to constantly keep up, and be aware of what's going on through their phones."

Nonetheless, the vast majority of youth in this study (85%, $n = 150$) indicated that their parents approve of their use of texting and web-based social networking, while 8% ($n = 14$) disagree that their parents approve and 7% ($n = 12$) are unsure. Many adults also agree (54%, $n = 73$) that they approve of their children's use of texting and web-based social networking, while 19% ($n = 26$) disagree and 27% ($n = 36$) are unsure of their approval.

While many youth talked about their daily use of texting and Facebook as well as their parents' monitoring of their online use, a few like Salim (18, Muslim), also expressed chagrin that their parents are not savvy with social media. He stated,

I feel like parents of other cultures actually do know what is going on. I have a lot of my friends that are not Indians and their parents are on Facebook and they have Twitter accounts and everything. My parents don't know what Twitter is. They are just so disconnected from technology; it is amazing; I find it mind boggling. My parents just do not know what's going on.

And while some parents may not be active users of social media, nonetheless they make it a point to know what their children are doing online. Female youth reported more often than males that their online activity is monitored. Shirisha's (15, Hindu) comments are indicative of what several of the female youth said: "My parents have my password and they check occasionally to see what I say; I talk to guys sometimes, but only casually."

As youth are using their mobile devices extensively for communication in lieu of actual live conversation with one another, it is quite easy for them to share information

and feelings regarding various details of their lives, as well as to almost effortlessly hide these from parents. Hence, there is greater probability of clandestine activity among friends and between the sexes. More than half of youth in this study (59%, $n = 104$) indicated that they express their feelings more often and easily with friends of both sexes through texting and web-based social networking sites, while 30% disagree ($n = 53$), and 11% ($n = 19$) are unsure. However, half of the adults (50%, $n = 68$) indicated that that they were not concerned about their children's activity related to interactions with the opposite sex via the Internet and cell phones, while 35% ($n = 47$) indicated concern about this and 15% ($n = 20$) are unsure, suggesting that many parents might feel a level of discomfort about this issue.

Additionally, youth seemed to be almost evenly divided in their opinions regarding parental awareness of their use of texting and web-based social networking sites to express their thoughts and feelings about issues related to dating, marriage and family. While 32% ($n = 56$) of youth agree that their parents are aware of their online activity in this regard, 35% ($n = 62$) disagree, and 33% ($n = 58$) are unsure. When asked if they experienced conflict with their children about dating issues and matters concerning relationships with the opposite sex that are conveyed via texting and web-based social networking sites, the majority of parents (57%, $n = 77$) indicated that they did not experience significant conflict with their children about this. On the other hand, 18% ($n = 24$) agree that they experienced significant conflict over this, while 25% ($n = 34$) are unsure, suggesting that discomfort with children's online activity does not necessarily lead to conflict. On these matters, females again tended to be more vocal in their

comments, perhaps reiterating the double standard some feel regarding regulation of their behavior.

Siya (21, Other religion) said that she was not allowed on Facebook when she was in high school. Even in college, she noted that her parents “wouldn’t be comfortable” if they viewed her profile. She further indicated that when she texts, her parents “become interrogative” and she “can’t hide the truth.” She noted that she backs away from male friends “due to guilt and fear, always worrying about what would happen if they (parents) found out” that she was communicating with them. Prema (18, Hindu) shared that “my mom knows I text boys, but they’re just friends.” Her parents “don’t like Facebook,” but they are on there and she has them as friends. She feels they are on Facebook mainly to keep an eye on her online activity, and allow her to use it “as long as I am a good girl,”²⁴ implying that she does not post or respond to anything her parents would not approve, particularly anything that may have sexual overtones or anything that may be misconstrued in such a way to tarnish the family reputation. As she noted, “we have to be careful what we put out there; you never know, even your future family or even your future in-laws may be watching what you do on Facebook too.” She indicated that it is not only her own parents that monitor her activity on Facebook, but other adults within the tight Indian communities in which many of these youth live also may be scoping, appraising and judging, and making mental notes of what they see online as a means to vet potential future spouses for their children.

²⁴ Ahmed (1999) defines a South Asian good girl or good daughter as a young woman “who may be called upon to be dutiful and obedient with parents as well as mindful of the expectations of a South Asian female in her interactions with others outside the family. In this way, the definition of a good daughter extends beyond that which takes place within the immediate relationship to encompass how the adolescent represents herself, and by extension, her family, within the world.” (45).

Targeted Websites and Cultural-Social Events to Facilitate Meeting

The use of social media, particularly through websites and phone apps, plays a very significant role in how teens and young adults are creating friendships and developing relationships that eventually lead to marriage. Perusing websites for the specific purpose of dating and finding a mate has become commonplace for this generation of youth. There has been a boom in the development of Internet dating services in recent years (Arnett 2015; Twenge 2014; Kalyanam 2004). Arnett reports that “22% of new relationships now begin through the Internet,” which indicates that “many people find romantic success through this method, even if it may take them many attempts” (2015:87). In addition to the numerous websites widely available to the general western population which have millions of subscribers, such as *www.Match.com* and *www.eHarmony.com*, there is a plethora of specifically targeted Indian matrimonial websites which cater to matching potential partners based on a variety of characteristics, including state of Indian origin, religion, caste, level of education, and even food preference. Parents as well as extended family and friends make use of these by either posting or searching profiles for prospective brides and grooms, who also may be searching the sites themselves, as well as posting their own profiles (Kalyanam 2004). In his guide to the Indian matrimonial process in America, Kalyanam (2004) lists 175 websites, and that catalogue continues to grow and change. The websites he notes range from hugely popular and well-known sites such as *www.shaadi.com* and *www.jeevansathi.com*, which include Indians of all origins, to more specifically targeted sites for specific segments of the Indian population, such as *www.tamilmatrimony.com*, which is for people from the southern state of Tamilnadu, and *www.sikhmatrimony.com*,

which caters to those practicing the Sikh religion (Kalyanam 2004). While sites such as these are regularly scouted by all involved in the matchmaking process, the practice of catfishing²⁵ is also a threat to the integrity of these sites. It is not uncommon for profiles to be inflated with dishonest information in order to attract a partner. Arnett (2015) briefly summarizes this problem:

Even with photo (and personality test) included, most people are likely to make themselves appear a lot more appealing and wart-free in cyberspace than they are in real life, so the great majority of meetings through Internet dating services are likely to begin with great expectations and end in disappointment. (2015:87)

This is another reason why parents, relatives and friends may be consulted to do some networking in order to clarify and verify details that are presented in a matrimonial profile. As Annada (37, Hindu) pointed out,

I guess people have more options these days because of the Internet marriage sites, but at the same time, I know that there are a lot of fraudulent people out there, so you have to carefully screen them, or have others screen for you.

Other participants in the study shared that they used websites to meet their partner, or knew others who did so. Sabita (17, Hindu) noted that her aunt met her husband through an Indian matrimonial website, though she did not know which one they used. Stan (62, Christian/NC) met his wife through an Indian dating website; “I placed an ad, we dated, and that’s how we married,” he said.

Stan also stated that he especially appreciates the number of social gatherings that are offered through his church, as a means for providing opportunities for his daughters to socialize with other Christian Indians. Stan continued that he much prefers that his daughters attend these types of gatherings, rather than go out alone or unchaperoned. His

²⁵ A catfish is someone who pretends to be someone they are not, using Facebook or other social media to create false identities, particularly to pursue deceptive online romances. (www.urbandictionary.com).

wife, Raizel (53, Christian/NC), added that it was through attending one of these church sponsored social events that her oldest daughter met her husband. “This is a good place you can look,” she said, noting that parents are keen to keep eyes and ears attuned to prospective spouses for their children. When her middle daughter asked if she could begin dating, Raizel again suggested a church gathering as a means to meet someone:

In the second year of college she asked, ‘Mom, I would like to date somebody.’ We said OK. We will go for the church group gatherings there are in the summer; all the Christians, all South Indians and North Indians, come for three or four days. One of those meetings we went to, and said this is a place you can look if you want to, and don’t pinpoint one person, just be friends with three, four, five boys of your age and see who you like, and just see if it falls in place for you. That’s how she got married.

Girvan, (62, Hindu) also felt more comfortable with socials sponsored by his temple, indicating that “these are the places to instill Indian values and traditions; this is where the kids can meet and mingle and maybe find someone.” Maira concurs that these social and cultural events for this ethnic community complement the “culturally private spaces of the family” (2002:182). She states that “Indian-American community gatherings, though public, are restricted to the ‘extended family of Indians,’ and hence are also defined as ‘private’ because they are circumscribed by the community’s norms and sanctions (2002:182). It is here in these spaces that the Indian-American community guards “what it perceives to be the nation’s cultural essence against contamination by dominant Western values” (2002:182). In essence, these examples of parental preference for children to meet prospective mates within the confines of these spaces illustrate the desire to insulate them from the wider western marriage market that is not in sync with their values.

Freedom and Choice with Dating and Eventual Marriage

As young adolescents grow toward early adulthood, they increasingly separate from

parents, and develop autonomy in decision making. This requires that parents relinquish direct control over adolescent behavior both outside and inside the home, especially in the domain of rules, which reflect a desire to maintain control over behaviors (Bulcroft, Carmody and Bulcroft 1996). Young adults brought up in America are “intent on making their own decisions without adult interference” according to Arnett (2015:94). He also suggests that today’s adults would not want to enforce restrictions on emerging adults as has been done in the past (2015:94). Furthermore, he asserts that parents “believe that by the time young people reach their late teens and early twenties, they deserve a wide scope of personal autonomy (2015:94). This is in direct contrast to the collectivist orientation of Indian culture which stresses the interconnectedness and interdependence of social relationships. In the collectivist context, it is assumed that parental influence continues in the life of adult children (Dion and Dion 1996). Traditionally, Indian parents believe that they should be involved in the personal lives of their children well into adulthood. Sharing opinions and discussing life matters is not perceived as interference, but rather as being interested and supportive (Dion and Dion 1996). American parents likewise desire inclusion in their adult children’s lives, yet their children have been encouraged to develop autonomy and to value individualism from an early age (Twenge 2014).

Although parents set boundaries, create rules and make concerted efforts to monitor their children’s behavior regarding dating, parents feel that it is important for their children to have personal freedom to make choices regarding dating and eventual marriage. Adults and youths responded similarly with 88% (n = 155) of youth and 73% (n = 99) of adults agreeing that youth do indeed have a right to personal freedom in making choices about dating and marriage. Only 5% (n = 9) of youth and 12% (n = 16)

of adults disagree with this, while 7% (n=12) of youth and 15% (n=20) of adults are unsure. Furthermore, many of the youth in this study disagree (49%, n = 86) that their right to personal freedom in making choices about dating and marriage is often constrained by their parents. However, 35% (n = 62) did agree to feeling parental constraint regarding their personal freedom in making such choices, while 16% (n = 28) were unsure. Likewise, parents disagree (54%, n = 73) that they constrain their children's right to personal freedom about choices involving dating and marriage, but 22% (n = 30) agree that they do constrain their child's freedom of choice, while 24% (n = 32) are unsure. As might be expected, older youth expressed more freedom of choice than younger adolescents.

Sophie (20, Christian/NC), stated that she feels free to discuss the idea of dating now that she is out of her teen years. She explained that at this point, she has a greater sense of freedom to make choices about dating, but also respects that her parents want to be informed of her activities:

I think with my parents, as I'm getting older, they are more open to the idea of dating. Their biggest thing with me is they want to be the first people to know so there is not so much hiding, as a lot of Indians do.

Keiran's (21, Christian, N/C) comments reflected the fact that he has greater freedom due to his age, but that his parents' input is still important:

For me personally I would probably say I have a decent amount of freedom deciding what I do, but it is not that I have so much freedom that my parents aren't involved at all. I feel like in every major decision I've made, my parents have been involved . . . and I do want to get my parents' approval.

Jaron (15, Christian, N/C) expressed adolescent angst about not having much of a say in decisions that affect his life, and projected future concerns about his parents curtailing his freedom to make decisions regarding marriage:

I definitely feel that I don't have enough input in my personal decisions, like the Christian school I am going to; at first, I really didn't want to go there . . . Same thing with my marriage. They say they are going to help me make a decision, but I feel like by the past things, they are going to force me to marry someone I don't even know.

This topic touched a very sensitive point for Rewa (36, Christian/NC), who believes that she suffered a lot of emotional distress in her young adult years as a result of not having any choice in dating, and of feeling forced to conform to parental expectations that she have an arranged marriage, which eventually ended in divorce. She expressed concern about the current generation of youth regarding what may happen if they don't feel personal freedom in making important choices about dating and marriage:

There is a big problem going on in our Indian community about the generation gap. I don't know if we have a solution for this. There are a lot of issues going on and the first thing we should be focusing on is marriage . . . The current generation . . . I am sure they are all dating and have boyfriends and girlfriends. Parents sometimes don't agree with that . . . but they should not have to pretend to be somebody else to keep their parents happy.

As these comments illustrate, parents indeed want to be involved in the choices their children make in matters of dating and relating with the opposite sex. They want information and they want to be consulted, even though they agree that granting personal freedom in decision making is important. In this respect, they are similar to parents who are described in studies by Leonard (1997), Gupta (1999), Rangaswamy (2000) and Shankar (2008). Each of these scholars also note that parents clash with their children about dating restrictions and the desire to be informed about what their children are doing in the realm of dating.

Comparison of Peers and Autonomy in Decision-Making

Participants were asked to compare whether non-Indian youth have more autonomy in decision making than they do regarding dating and marriage. Most youth agree (70%,

n = 123) that their non-Indian friends have more freedom in making choices about dating and marriage than they do, while some youth disagree (24%, n = 42) and others are unsure (6%, n = 11). Parents also lean toward agreeing that their child's non-Indian friends enjoy greater freedom in making choices about dating and marriage than their own children (56%, n = 76). However, 25% (n = 34) of adults disagree with this, while 19% (n = 25) are unsure, suggesting that perhaps this issue may be more important for youth to consider, and may not be as much of a concern for adults.

Two themes emerged from youths' opinions on this question. The first one expressed by several youth including Rashina (17, Catholic), is that many young Indian-Americans rebel because they feel a lack of freedom in making choices about dating and eventual marriage. While discussing the experiences of some of her friends she said,

In the Indian community these kids are like, oppressed. Indian friends that I had in high school, they had boyfriends and they dated, and their parents have absolutely no idea of half the stuff they do. In college they experience social change and they are not responsible; they just come out of their shell because they don't have to answer to anyone when they go home because they are going home to their dorms.

The second prevalent theme is not only that Indian-American youth feel a disparity with their western counterparts who are allowed to date as a matter of course, but also that some Indian-American parents have a rather narrow view of dating, which to them by definition implies the development of a sexual relationship. As Aldin (15, Christian/NC) described,

Americans are allowed to date. We are different than them; we follow a set of rules. My Mom and my Dad came from a strict religious background and strict cultural background, so they saw dating in a whole different perspective, like, just as hooking up with a girl and having sex and all that stuff . . . and that just makes it all messed up.

Because of the parental perception that dating automatically equates with sexual intimacy, many youth felt that it is yet another reason why their parents consequently put

strict rules in place to minimize temptation and opportunity to engage in activity that may lead to sexual behavior. Several females reiterated this point as well. Siya (21, Other religion) said, “My parents always assume dating leads to something they are against; they wouldn’t be comfortable with me having a relationship.”

These youth suggest again that the parental fear of sexual involvement is a primary factor in them not having as much freedom as their non-Indian peers. Their responses also reflect the perception of a western environment with less sexual restraint and perhaps less parental oversight of dating.

Even though youth feel that their non-Indian peers have more freedom of choice regarding dating and eventual marriage than they do, they don’t necessarily feel that their rights in this regard are tied to unrealistic parental expectations that they follow Indian traditions. Slightly more than half of the youth in this study (54%, $n = 95$) disagree that their right to personal freedom and happiness is constrained by parental expectations that they follow Indian traditions that are not relevant to them, while 28% ($n = 49$) agree that they feel constrained, and 18% ($n = 32$) are unsure. Many adults disagree (41%, $n = 55$) that their children think their rights to personal freedom and happiness are constrained by expectations that they follow Indian traditions which youth may consider irrelevant; however 28% ($n = 38$) agree, and 31% ($n = 42$) are unsure. Discussions that ensued from this question differed between adults and youth. While adults tended to focus more upon traditions associated with religious holidays and festivals and family functions, conversations with youth went to a deeper level. They were more concerned about issues of bicultural identity, as well as how to integrate their distinctiveness within both the Indian and American cultures. Adam (19, Catholic) described his struggles with this:

Honestly, it is like putting up a front on one end, trying to show my parents that I still have some of those values, but I guess when I am out with my friends, I guess I am being more toward the western with the dating stuff. Say down the line I was thinking about getting married to someone who wasn't Indian, I would have to introduce them early, maybe; trying to get them to recognize this person is someone I could still marry even though she is not Indian. Something like having to bridge between the two gaps. At first I would have to slowly bring them into the fold, I guess.

Sophie (20, Christian/NC) also addressed the issues of identity and negotiating her biculturalism, and in the process, she unknowingly described herself in the same way as author Sam George writes about the "coconut generation."²⁶

Sophie: Even if we say we are Indian, we are all pretty much American on the inside.

Dianne: You are Indian on the outside and American on the inside?

Sophie: Yes, kind of like brown on the outside and white on the inside.

Dianne: Like a coconut?

Sophie: Yes!

Dianne: So you are part of the coconut generation! (Explained meaning to her).

Sophie: Yes! We all go to school; we act the same as the White kids. I come to church and I wear an Indian outfit if I have to for certain holidays in India. We might dress up and have lunch but besides that, any other time when you invite extended family, they all speak in English for Thanksgiving and Christmas; we all eat American food daily. I know for me personally, with my parents, part of them wishes I was more like the Indian culture, but personally I relate more to the American culture so it is a little tricky with that, and it does sometimes cause rebellion. I think for a lot of us, it causes rebellion like that. I think that sometimes they do have a right to worry; that there is some stuff in American culture that isn't that great and that might not be in Indian culture. But, I think sometimes they overplay it a bit.

While constantly negotiating and managing conflicting cultural influences in shaping their identities, Indian-American youth often look to their friends to observe behaviors, and then either imitate them or decide upon alternate courses of action. Daddis (2008b)

²⁶ *Understanding the Coconut Generation* by Sam George (2006) describes and illustrates the push-pull of negotiating identity as well as culture by second generation Indian-Americans through the metaphor of being a coconut – brown on the outside and white on the inside.

discusses the influence that friends have upon social constructions, and states that adolescents gather information about freedoms and rules that their friends have, and then compare the boundaries that exist in their own families. As “the identification of a personal sphere of jurisdiction is essential to the formation of personal agency and identity,” Daddis notes that friends are “important sources of information as adolescents accommodate new perceptions of what issues should be considered to be within their personal jurisdiction” (2008b:93). While acknowledging that friends can exert a lot of influence in peer relationships, many youth in this study disagree (47%, $n = 83$) that their friends influence their choices about relationships with the opposite sex and expectations of marriage more than their parents do. In the context of this questions, the term ‘friends’ was used broadly, and not broken down to imply Indian or non-Indian friends. However, some youth (32%, $n = 56$) agree that this is true for them, while 21% ($n = 37$) are unsure. Many adults indicated uncertainty (44%, $n = 59$) about the influence of their children’s friends in this regard, while 27% ($n = 37$) agree and 29% ($n = 39$) disagree that their children are influenced more by friends than parents about relationships with the opposite sex and expectations of marriage.

During our discussion of his observations of Indian-American youth, Sam George (author, *The Coconut Generation* and *Before the Wedding Bells*), addressed the issue of friends’ influence in dating and marriage:

There are more of other factors that have gone into arrangement; it is not the arranged marriage that it used to be. The peers have a big say; people who are significant others in their lives; perhaps a big brother or big sister, they have a big say in it. Parental involvement and their stake in it are reduced, and there are others who have come up, and their own stake has been increased in the whole mate selection process.

Amil (15, Christian/NC), provided input regarding the viewpoint that was expressed by several youth:

For me, there is a lot tension; it is a hard process to be able to talk to your parents about this stuff because they might be stubborn about it or they might just ignore you. I think that you should be able to talk to some other people who have made their own independent choices, without asking for parents to say their opinions about it.

Twenge argues that the “more exposure kids get to American culture, the more they will rebel against the family first, group-oriented ethos of many cultures around the world” (2014:10). She further postulates that the social trend of doing “what makes you happy and don’t worry about what other people think” is “enormously different from the cultural ethos of previous decades, and it is a philosophy that GenMe takes entirely for granted” (2014:24). To assess the cogency of her claim, and once again addressing the notion of a collectivist versus an individualistic orientation, participants were asked if maintaining family harmony is more important to youth in getting their own way in matters of dating and marriage. There were minor differences of opinions between youth and adults, suggesting that preservation of family accord is important, and that it takes precedence over individual wishes. Many youth agree that maintaining family harmony is more important than getting their own way regarding dating and marriage (45%, $n = 79$), while 25% ($n = 44$) disagree and 30% ($n = 53$) are unsure. Adults felt slightly more strongly than youth about the notion that maintaining family harmony should have more importance than a child getting his or her own way in matters of dating and eventual marriage. While 52% ($n = 70$) of adults agree with this and 31% ($n = 42$) disagree, 17% ($n = 23$) are unsure.

Many Indian-American youth appear to be concerned about keeping peace in the family, not disappointing parents, and not incurring disapproval from extended family.

However Shankar claims that “this is not enough to convince them to follow this rigid value system to the letter” (2008:177), as may be illustrated by the number of youth who say they disagree or are unsure if family harmony should take precedence over the fulfillment of their own desires. Nonetheless, she also states that youth are more inclined to tow the line with meeting behavioral expectations in order to preserve peace in the family. The following comments illustrate viewpoints of youth in this regard:

Kripa (17, Hindu) stated,

They (parents) want us to be appropriate . . . and you don't want to offend a family member to see what you are doing. They don't want anyone's business in your business or your business in anyone else's business. They want us to be respectful outside.

Salim (18, Muslim) said,

To me, if I go out with a girl, I know it is not going to go any further, because I know how my parents are going to be about it. It is not going to go any further because my parents won't let it go further . . . I don't stray far from my religion and my culture . . . I feel like it's best just to conform and just have my parents happy, the family happy.

In these comments, it is evident that personal autonomy in youths' decisions regarding behavior is supplanted by the requirement to be aware of the reaction of others, and to shape behavior to parental and community expectations. In this regard, youth are very conscious that their parents function as “local guardians of the social and moral order,” with the task to transmit values, attitudes and beliefs of the culture to them, coupled with the belief that they will comply (Smetana 2002:62). To act in ways that are contrary to this may be viewed as selfish or inconsiderate, with the risk of damaging the family name.

Emerging Themes and Questions for the Future

While the writings of many of the Indian scholars noted in this chapter indicate that it

is difficult for Indian-American adolescents to fit into typical mainstream teenage and young adult social life, none of the youth expressed inordinate awkwardness or distress about the parental parameters that govern their day-to-day functioning within their social milieu. Apart from the obvious gendered issues of favor and leniency toward males, youth did not indicate that they felt the restrictions upon them were terribly unreasonable or needlessly repressive. Although they may be moderately resentful when they balk and complain at times about specific issues of curfews, or permission to participate in social functions, they are no different in that regard than anyone else of the same age group. However, the pattern of disproportionate supervision over females seems to continue.

The majority of youth in this study expressed that they are cognizant and respectful of traditional boundaries of social conduct between the sexes, which are still regarded as dignified decorum within the Indian community. They recognize that the rules about dating and interacting with the opposite sex not only serve to regulate their own personal behavior and to maintain amity within the family, but they also play a larger role in maintaining cultural expectations in the bigger landscape of their communities. Many of them seem to understand that they are expected to behave differently and to be more reserved with dating than their western peers. Although there are exceptions, the Indian-American youth participants don't overtly reject the behavioral parameters and boundaries that their parents try to enforce. They indicate that they do not feel they are missing out on anything during their adolescent years, and they are aware that as they grow into young adulthood, there will be plenty of time for dating exploration as they move towards marriage. Nonetheless, covert dating and sexual activity do occur, and disclosure about these topics will be addressed in another chapter.

For the most part, Indian-American youth expressed that they function well and thrive within their boundaries. Many youth are tempered by the desire not to disappoint their parents, and they want to please them as well as respect them. They do not seem to view their parents' input as interference; on the contrary, it is part and parcel of Indian parenting in their particular households. The adolescent rites of passage through dating may be somewhat different for Indian-American youth in that they likely occur in later adolescent years rather than earlier years, as is more common for western youth. However, I tend to agree with Maira that "the strategies Indian-American youth use to negotiate different expectations and meanings of dating are, in fact, their *own* rite of passage in adolescence" (2002:155).

On the surface it appears that Indian-American youth lack the ability to exercise much personal agency when it comes to dating, and that their autonomy is subjugated because of the many restrictions imposed on them. However, another plausible perspective might be that through cooperation with parental rules and acceptance of behavioral boundaries, they are exerting personal agency in maintaining cultural traditions that are important to their families and their communities, and apparently important to them as well. It is conceivable that these youth are interested in maintaining some of the cultural traditions that guide social activities leading up to marriage, not only out of respect for their parents and their heritage, but because they have meaning and value to them as well. These youth demonstrate that they are participating in many social activities and enjoying friendships, mostly without the burden of worry about balancing the demands of being in an exclusive relationship that may shift their focus or interfere with other activities that are important to them. Additionally, their compliance also may be indicative of the

collectivist mindset of considering how their behavior and choices affect the family as a whole, and not just themselves.

Nonetheless, as second generation Indian-American youth become more enmeshed in their westernized schools, neighborhoods and community lives, might there be an increase in the salience of autonomous control and agency over their personal lives as they assimilate more deeply into the culture? As they further identify with western culture, will their individual and personal spheres of jurisdiction more resemble those of their western counterparts, or those of more contemporary Indian norms? And will Indian-American parents become resigned to the dilution of the values they've worked very hard to instill, or will they fight harder to maintain their current spheres of control over their children? In a land that places high importance on personal autonomy, freedom of choice in all things, and constant striving toward individual fulfillment, will parents loosen their opinions or relax their rules regarding what they deem to be within moral parameters of behaviors, specifically with sexuality? And finally, will the gender gap begin to dissipate regarding rules and behavioral expectations for females? It is notable that there is a fair share of survey responses from parents which indicate uncertainty about their feelings on issues of dating and managing their children's private lives. Perhaps this is indicative of some ambivalence about their own struggles with the issues, and how their thoughts may be evolving, while their children are moving forward in another direction.

In closing this chapter, it is important to mention my personal awareness that although youth and parents appeared to be very open with me, indeed it is possible that information about youths' dating and romantic activities may not have been fully

disclosed to me. First, because I am an outsider, born and bred in western culture and not a native of the population whom I interviewed, the perception may exist that my understanding and appreciation for their struggles might be limited. Secondly, there is the risk of youth to feel that they may be judged for the opinions they present. Thirdly, due to the sensitive nature of the discussions that addressed matters of sexuality, it is possible that more detailed information might be withheld especially because of discomfort with the topic, shyness, or the fact that generally, sexual matters are not openly discussed in families, let alone with strangers. That said however, I believe the statements and opinions expressed through these interviews represent a rich and broad picture of the dating perspectives of Indian-American youth and their parents.

With this background perspective of dating practices as a precursor to marriage, the next chapter shifts the focus to how Indian-American youth will make choices regarding their future marriages. Will they consider having an arranged marriage, or will they desire a more autonomous process and decision? What will influence this major life decision? These questions are broadly examined in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Indian-American Modes of Marriage in the Modern World

Arranged marriage can be an enigmatic concept, often misunderstood by people who have been born and raised in western cultures. It may appear to be an antiquated or exotic practice rooted in foreign lands that has no relevance in the modern world. Or a more contemporary view might be that young people are subject to parental coercion and cultural expectations to carry on traditions which they might rather not abide. Those who are brought up in modern western cultures may be skeptical about how an arranged marriage possibly could work if partners have not dated, or are not in love, or have not shared physical or emotional intimacy prior to marriage. Often there is a lack of understanding about the process of arranged marriage, which may result in negative judgments by those unfamiliar with it.

In the United States, youth typically start dating during their teenage years, and continue until they are ready for marriage. For young adults, dating evolves from a social activity to a more deliberate preparation period prior to committing to a partner, and it usually includes the element of romance. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, dating practices are different for Indian-American youth, so how will they resolve the problem of meeting and committing to a potential mate? Most of their parents and relatives had arranged marriages, but how do they view the practice? Is it relevant to them? Will today's youth consider the possibility of a traditionally arranged marriage, or will they resist family efforts to maintain endogamy? Indian-American youth are faced with all of these questions as they navigate the challenges of modern social life and eventually prepare for marriage.

Several scholars discuss arranged marriage in a modern context and attest to the fact

that the tradition continues to be practiced today in many cultures, with many variants. Madathil and Benshoff point out that “arranged marriages are the prevailing practice in most of the world’s cultures,” and further, that “it is important to understand that there are variations in the process of mate selection in both arranged marriages and marriages of choice” (2008:223). Moreover, these scholars state that “regardless of societal customs, many individuals experience familial or society pressures related to marriage and mate selection” (2008:228). Specifically for Indian-Americans who have been born and raised in the United States, arranged marriage has evolved in modern times to include adaptations to the practice which have become acceptable to parents as well as potential brides and grooms. Madathil and Benshoff observed that in Indian society, there can be several “different cultural variations to the process of finding a mate” (2008:223). They note that “mate selection may vary from autonomous, in which individuals select their own spouses, to completely arranged, in which family elders select and negotiate for spouses for their marriageable children, with many gradations existing between the extremes” (2008:223).

According to Netting (2006), arranged marriage in India in the past 25 years included the practice of families investigating each other’s history, economic standing, education, health and drinking habits. Girls and boys “were matched within the same religion, caste, geographical region and economic background” (2006:134). If compatibility was favorable, the prospective bride and groom attended a brief meeting with both sets of parents, and were asked to consent without undue delay. Self-chosen marriage based on sexual attraction was practiced sometimes, but judged as unrighteous, and disrespectful of parents and society (Netting 2010; Uberoi 2006). Netting states that “the ideal of

passionate love remained a counter narrative in Indian culture, expressed in song, cinema, poetry, painting, and to some extent, in people's lives" (2010:709). Uberoi (2006) reports that Indian middle class families have found ways to adapt arranged marriage to changing socioeconomic realities by delaying marriage until schooling is finished and males had stable jobs. However she also notes that unmarried daughters continue to be closely monitored and heterosexual relationships continue to be suppressed, as evidenced in some of the findings in the previous chapter.

Talbani and Hasanali claim that the "the institution of marriage is an important instrument of social control" for south Asian families, and that from early childhood, "children are expected to marry within the religious-social group, especially girls, in whom the idea of marriage is inculcated as an important goal in their lives" (2000:618). They state that "after migration, families use this powerful instrument to foster new social and cultural alliances to ensure social stability" (2000:625). However, children of immigrants experience the influence of cultural values outside of their communities, and "ethnic identity declines significantly in the second generation" according to these scholars (2000:617). Consequently, as second generation adolescents navigate their bicultural identity, they almost certainly "undergo conflict and encounter contradictions between heritage and the host cultures," thus sometimes making it difficult to balance cultural and/or familial expectations with individual desires regarding relationships and eventual marriage (2000:617). Certainly this is true for the youth in this study, and the exploration of their attitudes about arranged marriage in this chapter is intended to reveal some of the conflicts and contradictions that they may feel.

Moreover, if Indian-American youth consider an arranged marriage, then they also are

confronted with dilemmas of surrendering their wishes and agency to those who might arrange it. They would be faced with questions of trusting parents and extended family and/or friends to have their best interests in mind and heart when selecting a potential mate for them. Consideration of endogamy also is relevant for them, because typically elements of religion, caste, class, socio-economic status and education are considered in matching a potential couple. There also is the question of personal autonomy to decide what is best for youth at a given point in time regarding dating, social and relational experimentation, and ultimately committing to marriage.

While discussing these challenges in an attempt to discern how youth view the possibility of an arranged marriage in their lives, several youth shared stories of their parents' arranged marriages. In many instances, their responses ranged from amazement to disbelief that their parents were matched and married quickly, often in less than a few months. Similarly, youth also conveyed that though they could not see themselves marrying someone so quickly without a period of dating, quite a few of them also indicated openness to the possibility of an arranged marriage. In this chapter I discuss attitudes about arranged marriage of both youths and adults who shared deeply personal opinions and stories about their experiences, as well as their hopes and dreams for the future. I attempt to answer the central question of relevancy of the tradition of arranged marriage for this sample of the population. Personal accounts of arranged marriages are used throughout the chapter to illustrate mate matching practices that occurred for several adults in this study, and which provide a basis of observation for youth. Highlights of opinions of both youths and adults regarding their desires to follow Indian and/or American marriage traditions also are presented, as well as their feelings about the

importance of maintaining endogamous marriage practices.

We Just Met and Now We're Married

It is not uncommon for those unfamiliar with arranged marriage to react with incredulity upon hearing that a couple met only days or weeks before making the life changing decision to marry. Yet meeting a potential spouse and proceeding with marriage in such a short time frame was indeed the case for the parents of many of the youth in this study, as well as several of the adults who shared their personal stories. Narratives such as these provide a framework of reference for Indian-American youth, and contribute to their construction of attitudes about arranged marriage. The following two anecdotes illustrate processes of arranged marriage that many first-generation adults in this study experienced. In the first narrative, Sarvi (56, Hindu) describes her whirlwind marriage to her husband Madesh, whom she married in 1982. She was living in India with her family, and her husband had been studying in the United States. Soon after he started a new job in the United States, he returned to India to find a bride to bring back with him. She recalled the story:

Mine was definitely an arranged marriage. My husband, he had come to the U.S.; he was studying here; he got a job here. After that he came to India, and it was an arranged meeting at my parents' place, and we just talked, and we had a very good feeling about it. So we met again, this time in a restaurant, just the two of us at that time; we talked for quite a long time, and we had a very good feeling. Actually ours was just something that happened so fast, and by then we talked to our parents; both of us had agreed that we are OK with going further. He talked to his parents, I talked to my parents, and we knew the family; they lived just two blocks away from us where we lived. My parents knew them for maybe eight years or so. So we were comfortable enough that it would be a good match. We were in our mid 20s; we are the same religion. I actually knew his sister very well, and even to this day, me and his sister are very close. We knew the family, so we didn't have to look at anything else. And if the two of us had agreed, then we didn't have to look anywhere else. Otherwise, generally when the two agree, they (parents) look into family background, and not just that family they know, but they see if anybody else knows them . . . We look at the stars and horoscopes for when you can marry, and in our case, they had

these good days and bad days when you can marry, and afterwards you can't marry. In our case, if we didn't get married in the next ten days, then there would be a month when we couldn't get the wedding date, because the stars weren't aligned right, so we could not have gotten married then ... So we decided we would rather get married right away, and that way we would have a month and a half together before he has to come back here and I would get all the paperwork and my visa to join him. I was working there, and so I had to get that in order also. And so it just happened then that we got married in ten days after the engagement, which was maybe a week since we had first met.

There are some striking things about Sarvi's marriage story, including the swiftness of the decision to marry, the implicit trust that because the families were acquainted, there was no need for more vetting of her future spouse, and the reliance upon alignment of the stars and horoscopes to determine the best time to marry. These are customs with which she was quite comfortable, and which continue to be common to Hindu marriages today.

In the second narrative, Jivin (47, Jain) also had come to the United States for education and work, and when he came of age to marry, he went to India at the urging of his family to explore the marriage market. Although he had considered potential Indian brides in the United States and concurrently also was dating a White woman for quite awhile, he felt obligated to satisfy his parents' request to return to his homeland to test the arranged marriage process. His story depicts the process of meeting and evaluating prospective marriage candidates, and also illustrates complex parental and cultural dynamics which influenced his ultimate choice of a wife:

Jivin: It was totally arranged, in the sense that I didn't know her. I was of marrying age; I went to India to look to get married if I found somebody; if I didn't, I was ready to come back ... basically it was like an interviewing process, visiting person after person; the process is you will get all of this bio data - biography and data on each person - which is basically a stack of resumes. You basically sift through those based upon academics, personality, likes/dislikes, and families of who you want to see. Sometimes they have pictures in them ... sometimes the family says, yep, you are going to see this one no matter what; sometimes you just say OK, this one is out and basically, you shortlist. After short listing, you go out and actually meet the person and that is another process in itself. From there you basically then choose.

Dianne: How was the bio data collected?

Jivin: My uncles knew that I was coming; so, basically, you send out the word that you have a son looking for a bride.

Dianne: Did you look anywhere in the United States for a bride?

Jivin: I did . . . all over the place. The draw just wasn't there -- just that the caliber of the person didn't meet what I was looking for.

Dianne: How did you choose your wife from this process?

Jivin: Interestingly, we had a conversation . . . not marriage focused at all. We had a very open conversation like what books do you like, what do you like to do; just talked about so many other things. From that, it emerged that she was pretty interesting and worth meeting again . . . So, you basically have second interviews . . . So again, more conversation, but not about marriage itself. The other women I talked to -- it was very much down and dirty -- OK, what are you looking for in a husband; what are you looking for in a wife? -- very focused. [She] was so open; we didn't talk about a wedding at all, just about personality, and that was the attraction.

She was different . . . With her, we never talked about marriage . . . but at the same time, you knew exactly what you got. So, we actually had a third meeting . . . This time we got into the marriage conversation like OK, what do you think? . . . One of the back stories that play into this is that I had been dating somebody American at the time pretty seriously. . . It was a question of her or this other woman, who is American, and choosing between the two. At that moment the American woman that I had been seeing was to the side for a second, because I knew if I didn't find anybody, I was going to go back and get married. And if I did find somebody . . . I would have to choose! She knew about this going in; I told her, and she questioned me about it, like why was I here looking, and what was I scared about? In the third conversation when we finally did get to the marriage conversation, she was very open and direct, to the point, basically saying that I had a choice to make . . . but there is humility underneath it. At that point, this is now neck and neck between her and the woman I had been dating here.

Dianne: May I ask, did the American girlfriend know that you were going there to interview prospective wives?

Jivin: Yeah, I told her.

Dianne: How did she take that?

Jivin: Here is what I laid on the line: Because she was American, my parents struggled with it; they really struggled with the cultural differences. I knew that for my

parents, to get them over that hump, I needed to at least make the effort to say I tried, and then come back and say, OK, let's get married, because that would be the green light to say I tried. I looked in earnestness and sincerity, didn't find anybody . . . and now I want you (parents) to get behind me in the decision I make. So, I explained all of this to her . . . We had an agreement when I left that if something happened, if I found somebody, she said to call her. I thought, I'm *not* going to call her; *it was not going to happen*. Then all of the sudden I met her (his wife) and . . . *what did I do?!* There were pros and cons of both people, and then at that point when I made the decision . . . it was the toughest phone call I've ever had to make . . . because she was someone who was going to be my wife. When Indian guys are here and single, they get exposed to a culture that they have never seen before; it is like the fruit that they have never been able to touch, enjoy. But, once that sort of settles in, you ask, is this the way it is going to be long term? An Indian guy looks at the complete equation of what comes with it - the family, the children, how you raise the children, the kind of lifestyle . . . and the Indian traditions as you know, run deep; much deeper than many acknowledge in their youth, but when they get to that point it really comes out.

Dianne: How did your family feel that you had chosen an Indian bride?

Jivin: I would say happy and relieved. Both. My family had nearly written me off, worried that it wasn't going to happen. So it happened very fast. We met in June, so it was August and we were engaged . . . [and] married in November.

It appears that in the end, Jivin's decision to forsake his American girlfriend and choose to accept an arranged marriage reflected the significance of commonality of culture, the desire to please and pacify parents, and the belief that maintaining and integrating Indian tradition into his future family life is important. In Jivin's case, it's quite evident that his relationship with his future wife also had to include compatibility with his family and with his culture. Any romantic or exotic ideals of a cross-cultural marriage clearly gave way to an easier, more practical arrangement, with less possibility for culture shock, or problems of adjustment and integration that might have occurred had he married his American girlfriend. The myth that love can conquer all barriers did not hold true in Jivin's experience, as he grew quite aware during his matchmaking process that differences in cultural practices and values could be serious issues that would divide his family. It's interesting to note how long Jivin withheld commitment to his American

girlfriend, and how quickly he bent to the family pressure to pursue marriage possibilities to an Indian woman. It definitely was difficult for him to separate his personal life from his relationship with his family, especially when it came to making a lifetime commitment to a wife. And although he said that he loved his American girlfriend, he also was willing to accept that love would develop with his Indian wife after the marriage.

The Practice of Arranged Marriage: Defunct or Different?

While acknowledging that the practice of arranged marriage has evolved over time and that being raised in western culture influences perceptions and practices of arranged marriage, both adults and youths expressed somewhat divergent opinions about it. While not completely closed to the possibility of arranged marriage, youths are clear that they want to participate in decisions about mate selection. This finding also has been noted in works by Gupta (1999); (Leonard 1999); Rangaswamy (2000); Khandelwal (2002); Netting (2006, 2010); Jain (2008) and Giridharadas (2011). Parents also expressed their openness to their children's opinions, and their desires regarding the right to choose a partner. Yet parents also are cognizant of traditions that have been passed down through the generations, and they have varying degrees of aspiration about maintaining those traditions.

Relevance, Desire and Importance of Arranged Marriage

Youth and adults were surveyed regarding the relevance of arranged marriage, their desires to have an arranged marriage, and the importance of preserving Indian marriage traditions. Their responses reveal some ambivalence about these topics and lack of certainty about the direction of arranged marriage in the future, as illustrated by the

following results.

A key question in this study is to determine how youth and adults feel about arranged marriage in today's modern world. Both youth (mean = 3.58) and adults (mean = 3.67) are close in their opinions of leaning toward agreement that the practice of arranged marriage is still relevant in today's society ($t = 0.94$; $df = 290.94$; $p \geq .05$). To qualify their responses, several of the youth expressed their perceptions and interpretations of arranged marriage as it is currently practiced. Prabir (17, Hindu) shared his perspective regarding how his generation defines arranged marriage:

I think now traditional Indian marriage has changed to just a definition of the actual wedding ceremony and the proceeding, and how there is a huge tie of the religion, culture and family in the wedding. It doesn't necessarily mean it is arranged as it used to be. I think the definition of an arranged marriage has also changed over the years, where it was a large proceeding in which a lot of people were consulted to make sure the pairing was what they considered to be the perfect match. Now an arranged marriage is kind of loosened to the definition that the parents will have a large input in deciding who the two partners will be, but the bride and groom do have some freedom in being able to choose. It is more of the parents either selecting people and the bride and groom will approve the person; or the other way around, where the bride and groom will find someone, whether it is through love or through their personal connections, and will show this person to the family, and the family will approve or disapprove of the partnership.

Sophie (20, Christian/NC) provided a similar comment regarding how arranged marriage works in today's world, but also points out differences in culture between the generations:

Talking to my parents, they pretty much say the whole traditional Indian arranged marriage where you don't know your husband or wife at all or very barely, doesn't really happen as much in India anymore. There is an arranged marriage [in which] the two people get to know each other first and then decide; the parents arrange it but the two people get to know each other and then decide if they want to get married or not. I think it is a little tricky for us because we grew up in a culture where it is OK to date and it is OK to meet new people and go out a few times; whereas, our parents want us to be one and done, preferably, and try to keep it at a minimum.

Adam (19, Catholic) described his parents' arranged marriage, as well as his uncertainty about how an arrangement might happen today:

My parents had an arranged marriage. I'm pretty sure there was some sort of a matchmaker involved. What they told me about it was they met once or twice and then a few weeks after the first time they met, they decided they were 'it' for each other and they ended up getting married. They knew each other about a month before they got married. They met each other a few times; it wasn't that much. I thought a month was not enough time to know if that is the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. I feel like that kind of decision is a little too quick to decide. It worked out for them I guess. Everything worked out fine. I don't know if it still works out for other people; I'm not sure how successful that could be today.

With few exceptions, the Indian-American youth who participated in this study all spoke about when they would marry, rather than if they would marry, similarly to participants in studies by Netting (2006, 2010); Shankar (2008); Gupta (1999) and Leonard (1997;1999). It appears that marriage in their futures is a given, it is an expectation, it is important, and it is valued. They are exposed to the concept of arranged marriage as an integral part of their culture, and they likewise are living in western culture that accepts a variety of ways to form a couple or a family (Arnett 2015; Twenge 2014). And while youth and adults indicate that arranged marriage is still relevant, there is some disparity in how they view the desirability of arranged marriage. More than half of youth (57%, $n = 100$) disagree that they want to have an arranged marriage, while 13% ($n = 23$) agree to wanting an arranged marriage and 30% ($n = 53$) are not sure about having an arranged marriage. However, almost half of the adults (49%, $n = 66$) agree that they want their child to have an arranged marriage, while 28% ($n = 38$) disagree and 23% ($n = 31$) are unsure about wanting their child to have an arranged marriage. Parents expressed why they feel an arranged marriage is possible for their children, emphasizing that at the core of this type of marriage is the melding of families and maintenance of

Indian culture. For parents, it appears that marriage has a broader familial and societal purpose, rather than serving only the needs of the couple and/or individual requirements for personal fulfillment.

Shaira (45, Hindu) explained what many parents in this study expressed in the course of our conversations:

For us, families are important. That is one thing that I think is maybe very different from Western marriages; we believe in India, when you marry, you are not marrying an individual, you are marrying into a family. That idea is very much at the core of arranged marriage. At the core, it is not based on just one individual, so we don't invest too much in that person. It is like everybody supports us in coming close to that one person, and we need all of that support to get close. You don't always fall in love; that can take time, but sometimes love happens. It is a different kind of gamble, but it works.

Nidha (44, Hindu) added that parents still encourage children to be aware of what she perceives as the advantages of joining an Indian family with similar characteristics:

Arranged marriages are not traditional anymore but subconsciously, every parent tells their children it would be nice if it were an Indian family; it would be nice if socio-economic background matches; it would be nice if religion matches; it is ingrained in us. They were not choices for us; we did that subconsciously. And we are doing the same to our children without being really forceful. Just the way we brought our children up; they are so comfortable with their culture that I think they will seek things like that when they marry, maybe with our help.

Sristi (53, Jain) has discussed arranged marriage with both of her sons, but at this point in time, she is concerned with preparing her older son for marriage. She feels he should marry in the next year or two, since he is in his mid 20s and recently established in his career:

My older son, or even my younger one will say, 'Mom, who do you want us to get married to?' I said, 'Anybody you find, but we are going to go to India in December and I was asking my older son, have you found someone? Do you think you like someone? How about if we go to India and I tell my brother and sisters if they have any friends whose daughters are eligible?' So my older son said he would see them. He is open to arranging a marriage. He said, 'Mom, do I have to decide in three days like you?' I said, 'No. It's a changing world; if you meet them and if you like them,

all you have to say is you are going to talk to them on email, Facebook or Skype, and then we will decide from there.'

Radhav (16, Jain), younger son of Sristi, shared his views:

I would sort of want an arranged marriage, but I also want the chance to choose a partner, to be involved in the process. I guess my parents didn't get to choose their own marriage, but now I get to choose that. I can have a choice between choosing arranged marriage and finding a partner on my own; my parents are OK with that.

Mohita (20, Hindu), conveyed her firm desire for an arranged marriage. She formed her opinion based on the fact that her parents, who are from different castes, had a love marriage which caused difficulties for her mother. Mohita reported that relatives on her father's side of the family, particularly her grandmother, did not accept her mother very easily, nor did they approve of the love match. Consequently, her mother experienced problems with her father's family, which calmed down only when they moved to the United States:

I just want my parents or my family back in India to help me choose someone; I want an arranged marriage. Just because I grew up with my Dad's side of the family almost always neglecting me as a child because they weren't so close to my Mom. All my friends always had both sides of their family together. So I think it is important for me to have my kids have both sides of the family. I want it to be a family decision, not just my own decision; it would be an arranged marriage. It wouldn't be like the old school arrangement; it would be more like they would choose people, or if they know someone in a family, or someone who would suit our family well. I am open to meeting the guy and talking to him and seeing how things go. At some point I would have to make my own decision, and I would make that after dating the guy for awhile and being with him. But, I definitely want my family's involvement; not just my parents, but my grandparents back at home and my aunts and uncles too. I just want people to accept us as a family.

Mohita also shared that some of her aunts and uncles had love marriages and some had arranged marriages, but she feels that the arranged marriages are more successful, because they are "not based on love, but on compatibility, financial stability and good planning." These elements also are addressed by George and George (2010) in their

guide for successful marital planning, as well as by Seth (2008) in her work on the wisdom of arranged marriage. Mohita's points seem logical and sensible in light of her experiences, and because even though there sometimes is the illusion of choice of many possible marriage partners, it may take considerable effort to find a match that is practically and personally compatible. To request help in the matching process from family near and far seems appropriate and prudent.

On the other hand, Siya (21, Other religion) expressed that she does not want to have an arranged marriage. During a discussion about how taking anthropology courses at college increased her understanding of her own culture as well as that of other populations, she stated,

Right now, I'm not sure if I even want to get married, but if I do, then it would not be arranged. In fact, the person I would marry doesn't have to be Indian or the same caste; I don't have a preference. My parents might expect to arrange a marriage though, but you don't have to follow cultural traditions just for the sake of doing it.

Shirisha (15, Hindu) also stated that although her parents have had a successful arranged marriage, she would like to meet someone on her own and fall in love:

Seeing how well my parents' marriage worked out and how well other family members' marriages worked out, I feel I can ask them for what qualities to look for, what traits, so I can know how to pick a good person. I want to find a good person and probably not have them pick someone for me, but I definitely want their approval of who I might pick.

Arranged marriages have been an integral part of maintaining Indian cultural traditions throughout history (Coontz 2005; Singh 2010). Nonetheless, the majority of youth in this study (70%, $n = 123$) disagree that an arranged marriage is important to them for maintaining Indian tradition, while 14% ($n = 25$) agree and 16% ($n = 28$) are unsure that an arranged marriage is important to them for maintaining Indian tradition. Many adults (52%, $n = 70$) also disagree that an arranged marriage for their child is

important to them for maintaining Indian tradition; however, 37% (n = 50) agree that arranged marriage for their child is important for maintaining Indian tradition, and 11% (n = 15) are unsure.

Shaira (45, Hindu) again succinctly stated what many respondents similarly expressed:

I think maybe it is a great thing for them to get the best of both worlds; if they find somebody, good! But if they don't, they can always go to mom or dad and say hey, maybe you could find a boy or girl for me.

Several youth in the study who said that they would be open to the possibility of an arranged marriage have had the tradition of arranged marriage continue in their families, and so they fully expect to have arranged marriages as well. However, each of them has a differing viewpoint on the amount of freedom they will have in accepting a match proposed by family. This is a recurring theme in much of the literature which discusses arranged marriage (Gupta 1999; Leonard 1999; Rangaswamy 2000; Maira 2002; Netting 2006, 2010; Shankar 2008; Singh 2010). Prema (18, Hindu) shared her speculation about the progression of events that she expects to experience as she moves toward marriage:

So far in my family, nobody has had anything other than arranged marriages; that is the only thing I have been exposed to in my family situations . . . I think I will have that, yes . . . I think I am going to get married when I am 25 . . . This is what we plan on doing: I would say that through friends, my Dad's friends, or if anyone we know would suggest a boy, we would do that; I think my parents would have him come in, see the family and I will talk to him, and we will have some gap in between. Then I and he will get to know each other a little more before getting married.

Dianne: How much freedom would you have in participating in this decision regarding who you would marry?

Prema: I think I would have almost all the freedom I would want. I think I would have not 100% but I think I would have 85% - 90% freedom.

Dianne: So you could say 'no' if you didn't agree with it?

Prema: Right, and if I don't like the guy that my parents tell me, what I would just say is, find me another guy and that is it.

Salim (18, Muslim) likewise expects an arranged marriage, but he is more resigned to its likelihood, rather than happily anticipating it:

Salim: Well, basically, my whole family - all my cousins, my grandparents - all have had arranged marriages. It is the tradition and has passed down, and just is the way our family is. Besides, I feel like they think there are no other options . . . all my cousins have followed the same rule . . . They all just follow the tradition of an arranged marriage.

Dianne: How were spouses found for your cousins?

Salim: The parents usually go to India and they look for spouses over there, or they look in America sometimes. To tell you the truth, I actually don't know how they find these people, but it works out apparently, because they are all happy.

Dianne: What is the expectation for you? Will your parents expect you to have an arranged marriage?

Salim: I guess I am kind of forced into it even though I don't want one because I'd rather meet somebody and have leisure time to get to know them more . . . But then again, my parents would be extremely against it; and, news will spread like wildfire in the whole family, like oh my God, he is not having an arranged marriage . . . ! I really don't want one, but I feel like it's best to just conform and keep everyone happy . . . I do have freedom . . . but I feel like in the end, I'll probably have an arranged marriage.

Dianne: What is influencing those expectations?

Salim: I think it is the culture; it has been going on for so many years. People just know about it and pass down the culture; grandparents had it and it worked out for them, and it is passed down, and people don't want to change.

Though both Prema and Salim expect that arranged marriages are in their futures, Prema feels that she has a greater sense of autonomy in the ultimate selection of a potential spouse. On the other hand, Salim seems reluctantly resigned to the process, and understands that there is no other choice for him since everyone else in his family has conformed to the practice, and they adhere to Muslim tradition.

Similar to the previous survey question about maintaining Indian traditions, both youth (mean = 3.51) and adults (mean = 3.69) lean toward agreement that it is important

to preserve Indian traditions of marriage and family in modern society ($t = 1.43$; $df = 298.65$; $p \geq .05$). However, this question was interpreted by adults and youth to refer to wedding practices such as wearing traditional clothing and participating in religious and/or cultural ceremonies rather than having an arranged marriage. Another interpretation conveyed by some of the participants alludes to maintaining closeness in families and to being a good person, or being a positive participant in a marriage or family. Rutika (17, Hindu) spoke about the colorful and festive aspects of Indian weddings: “The festive part of the marriage ceremony, the decorations, outfits and foods; I really enjoy that and think it is really traditional. Those things should stay the same; they are important to our culture.”

Rewa (36, Christian/NC) discussing her son, stated:

I am not very particular about him trying to follow the Indian culture. I know there is a big difference between him and me. I was born and raised in India; he was born and is being raised here in the U.S.. So, I will have to understand that he is different than me. But I would make sure that I instill some of the good things; I don't want him to blindly follow everything that Indian culture has to offer. My hope for my son is that I want to see him have a good family; to be a good father; be a good husband and have a good career and be a good Christian, and I don't think you would have to be Indian to be any of this.

Participants also were asked to indicate their preferences about which marriage traditions and cultural practices to follow, and 40% of youth ($n = 70$) stated that they would prefer to follow modern American marriage traditions and practices, while 33% ($n = 58$) disagree, and 27% ($n = 48$) are unsure. Many youth (76%, $n = 134$) stated that they would prefer to follow a combination of Indian and American marriage traditions, while 9% ($n = 16$) disagree and 15% ($n = 26$) are unsure about this. Adults appear to be keen that their children follow some Indian marriage traditions; 75% ($n = 101$) prefer that their children follow a combination of Indian and American marriage traditions and

practices; while 15% (n = 20) disagree and 10% (n = 14) are unsure that their children should follow a cultural fusion of marriage traditions. Additionally, the majority of adults (71%, n = 96) disagree that they would prefer their children to solely follow American marriage traditions and practices, while 6% (n = 8) agree and 23% (n = 31) are unsure. Rutika (17, Hindu) offered her views on this topic, indicating her uncertainty regarding how the synthesis of cultures might work:

I think my parents are expecting me to have a love marriage only because my sister is dating a White guy, and they are really expecting a relationship and a wedding with him, so I don't think they would mind us having a love marriage. But I think culturally a lot of things will come up, like the different things we do at the holidays. And if we get married to an American or a Catholic, what kind of wedding would we have – an Indian marriage or an American wedding? I think struggles like that might be hard. My parents give us a lot of leeway; they say you can choose whoever you want; they give us that freedom, so we are all accepting of it. But I'm not really sure about how those struggles would work out; I guess it will depend on the person and how he fits in with us.

Discussing his 23-year-old sister and her potential marriage, Ketav (20, Hindu) noted that loyalty to family and upholding some semblance of Indian tradition is important:

I think she will find a compromise between Indian and American traditions. She will probably meet a guy, get to know him a little bit, won't do any active dating but more of casual social hanging out with each other, just talking. If they think they can spend the rest of their lives with each other, they will just tell the parents about it and if the parents approve, they will set something up. But she will definitely marry an Indian guy. The core concept of an Indian marriage, which is loyalty amongst the families, has to be part of it too.

From these responses, it is evident that there is a clear preference for following a combination of both Indian and American marriage traditions, which unsurprisingly reflects the bicultural heritage of the participants. It also is interesting to note that most youth are not interested in solely following American traditions, while the majority of adults do not want their children to abandon their Indian roots and follow only American

traditions. For both groups, the maintenance of some Indian marriage traditions is important.

Further elaborating on the marriage queries, adults and youth were asked if Indian marriages are a stronger model to follow in comparison to western models of marriage. Adults (mean = 3.70) agree more strongly than youth (mean = 3.02) that Indian marriages are a stronger model to follow than western models of marriage ($t = 5.58$; $df = 301.75$; $p \leq .05$). Reeva (44, Hindu) commented on how she thinks marriage is changing for the younger generation:

Marriage as an institution is changing, I think, more because of the influences of the West. We didn't have so much choice, but our kids do have a choice of cohabitation and just being together before they get married. Marriage in the Indian sense of the way we were brought up is more about adjustment and family; but, we really didn't know that when we were getting married; we learned it gradually. We are still learning. Now we know for a fact it is all about our kids and having harmony at home; so it doesn't matter whether you are so happy with your husband or really not. I'm sure he has the same qualms about me, but it is all importance on family values that makes Indian marriage strong.

Nidha (44, Hindu) offered a similar viewpoint regarding the Indian model of marriage being focused primarily on the family:

I would hope that our kids growing up here, having the benefit of seeing different cultures and still getting the very Indian sort of traditional feeling, that they will appreciate what an Indian marriage is. It is primarily all about family. They have this sense too, because of their grandparents. My mother-in-law is with us too, so they see that. They see that marriage is more about family; not so much just about the couple.

These mothers point out the Indian cultural construct of marriage as being primarily about the building and maintenance of family, and less about the individual needs of partners. They seem to project the concept of family as an important cultural anchor, and in that sense, Indian models of marriage are preferable for their children to follow because of that emphasis.

Romantic Love as a Foundation for Marriage

Considering romantic love from a cultural perspective has relevance for understanding changing norms around institutions such as marriage (Dion and Dion 1996). These scholars state that the search for personal growth and fulfillment based on romantic love “assumes that marriage primarily should function to promote self-development” (1996:15). With this assumption, if each member of the couple is not growing together, then the basis for the marriage might be questioned. Dion and Dion (1996) further note that members of collectivist societies may object to this notion because it conflicts with core assumptions about the relationship between family and self. In arranged marriage, the focus is on devotion and loyalty to the family as a whole, with the presumption that love will grow between the couple as they live together and share goals of raising a family together (Seth 2008; Kalyanam 2004), thereby once again shifting the focus to the newly created family, with less emphasis on the emotional needs of the couple or individuals.

However, romance is ingrained in western consciousness and reinforced through all forms of media and literature; it is a compelling concept for youth as they imagine their future relationships. As Netting states, while the ancestors of Indian youth “heard mythical love stories, and their parents encountered romance in novels and films, young Indians today can imagine love marriage as a real possibility for themselves” (2010:44). When Netting (2006) studied Indian-Canadian youth and their preferences for marriage, she also found that the western ideal of romance had become very important to them, and they endorsed it as their first requirement for marriage, while their parents still felt that love should develop only after marriage.

In the previous chapter, it was noted that Indian-American parents expressed a lack of confidence in romance as a strong basis for marriage, while youth indicated their aspiration for romance as a desirable component of their future marriage. The survey results in this section support those remarks, as there is a notable difference in the viewpoints of adults and youth regarding romantic love, with youth (mean = 2.01) disagreeing more strongly than adults (mean = 2.91) that romantic love is not a solid foundation for marriage ($t = 7.23$; $df = 260.73$; $p \leq .05$).

Jivin (47, Jain) whose story of eschewing romance with his American girlfriend in favor of an arranged marriage with an Indian girl was recounted earlier, and his wife Aruna (44, Jain) have a more practical rather than romantic view of marriage, along with recognition of the power of familial influence (which has been noted as a very significant factor in their union):

Jivin: When you go into a romantic marriage, it is based on 'I like you.' As we mature, our likes and dislikes will change. The attraction level might change and then the dissatisfaction occurs. When you have an arranged marriage, you almost have that understanding going in that it is not about me; I am getting into this relationship because there is a broader 'we' in place. I've made a commitment that I am going to humble myself. So when you get something that is great, that is bonus territory; if you don't get something that is so great because let's face it, there are some people who don't get a great deal when they get an arranged marriage, then it's still OK. You can work to make it work. But I think when you get into some really tough situations, you might get divorced. And, it happens; the divorce rate in Indian culture is increasing, too.

Aruna added to her husband's comments:

I think in a lot of love marriages what happens is because you know each other a lot, maybe four or five years, you already know every nook and cranny about the other person's personality, likes and dislikes. There is nothing new to find out. The wedding day and the wedding week is, I guess, the excitement for that couple; but their life has been going on because they don't propose until they start living together, they have seen all the habits, the 24 hours with them. With arranged marriages you start so new to finding out who is this person; that curiosity, that newness of the whole person, like dating from the very beginning and knowing that you do not have an out.

In love marriages you know you always have an out, saying I don't think this is working and then you walk out. In arranged marriages, you are constantly finding out about the partner, so your compromising is higher than what you have in love marriages. So you are sticking together more. In the arranged marriages, because they are involving families and the so called name of the family, the social aspect of it makes that pressure; it is an indirect pressure, but it is still there and that helps you with compromise . . . I think that is why arranged marriages work more in Indian culture because you spend more time being committed in the relationship.

While Jivin's and Aruna's remarks about romance and marriage are similar to commentary from other adults in this study with themes of understanding the broader commitment to family, discussions with youth revealed their more romantic views.

Adam (19, Catholic) mentioned his desire to fall in love and get to know his future spouse before committing to marriage:

Honestly, I would take my vows seriously; if I were married, I would put it in my mind that divorce isn't an option because you do say 'till death do us part' and you should really mean it when you get married. That is why I don't think arranged marriage is that great because you only know the person for a month. How can you really know that this is the person that - I don't know how to put it - you don't want to go astray if you find someone better? You have to make sure it's the person; that is why I think love marriage gives you time to figure out what you want and who that person really is; not like who they pretend to be for the first week. There's time to get to know them, to fall in love with them, and to feel sure.

Sonya (19, Christian/NC) expressed her requirement to be in love with the person that she marries, as well as her chagrin that arranged couples are expected to commit to one another without being in love:

I just want to marry someone who I love, not someone who I think it might work out with. I want to be 100% sure of myself before I make that commitment. I have to be sure I love that person; I have to be able to trust that person; I think trust and love are two important things that before you marry someone you need to have with each other. I pity people who get married and they are not in love. I saw people get married and they love each other, but that is not the case in India. I think it is really sad. What they believe is, OK you will get married and then you will fall in love. Are you kidding me!?! It's like being thrown in a hole; elders just throw them in there and say, alright, good luck! I think it is crazy! I just can't possibly imagine how that works! People get through it, I guess. Oh no, not me!

Although Kruthika (20, Hindu) shared that she felt situations can differ for a variety of reasons, she was quick to clarify a major difference in family support for arranged versus love marriages:

I think it is very different for each family, especially with Indian culture here, though it is probably similar in India. If you end up having a love marriage and you end up marrying someone that your parents are a little bit iffy about at first, but then they actually like the guy and you get married, then you are happy. But then if something goes wrong in the relationship, you know your parents are going to throw it back in your face. Like, oh we told you not to, blah, blah, blah. This is why you are getting divorced because we didn't like him to begin with, and they throw it back in your face. That is very, very typical of Indian families.

From these comments of youth, certainly there seems to be a desire for romance in marriage; yet there also are concerns of adults about the centrality of it in the marriage process. To Indian-American families, romance seems more of a peripheral rather than a vital component in long-term marital relationships (Gupta 1999).

Gender and Arranged Marriage

Like many women around the world, women in Indian culture are considered the bearers of tradition, and they are expected to act in accordance with the prevailing standards and practices of their society, including those surrounding marriage and childbearing (Gupta 1999; Dasgupta and DasDasgupta 2002). As noted in the previous chapter, girls have less freedom of social movement and more restrictions placed upon them regarding dating and relating with the opposite sex (Leonard 1997; Gupta 1999; Rangaswamy 2000; Dasgupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Maira 2002; Shankar 2008). Because of the differences in how males and females are treated in this regard, participants were asked if girls are more likely than boys to have an arranged marriage. More youth (mean = 3.18) than adults (mean = 2.62) believe that girls are more likely than boys to have an arranged marriage ($t = 4.83$; $df = 306.49$; $p \leq .05$).

These responses seem to reflect the gender bias toward more control over girls and the stigma that surrounds them and their families if they are not married by a particular age, usually in the late 20's (Gupta 1999b; Leonard 1999; Jain 2008). Some of the female youth articulated their viewpoints on this with specific reference to gender differences:

Sophie (20, Christian/NC) stated her desire to marry and the notion of an intrinsic desire in females to want to do so:

I want to be married; I am a girl and I think it is in us to want to be married. I think I would want a love marriage; or, if my parents tell me about someone, I would be OK with that . . . It's important for us as girls to get married, no matter how we do it. It's important to our parents too.

Vanya (21, Hindu) discussed the cultural importance of marriage and the parental obligation to make sure that daughters are married:

Marriage is very important in our culture. I have always grown up thinking that marriage is one of the turning points in an individual's life where you have to go from one specific stage in life to another. I know in our culture for women themselves, they are born three times, they say. Once you are born as the daughter of your parents; second is when you become the daughter-in-law or the wife of someone else and you have another name; and the third is you become a mother. Part of our society and community life is that once your kids are older, parents have to get their daughters married off at the appropriate or proper age. Both of my parents will have to fulfill their obligation of getting me married off.

Kruthika (20, Hindu) also referenced parental obligations as well as community support for the goal of marriage, especially for daughters:

I feel like the goals of Indian parents are to have kids, raise their kids, give them a really good education and make sure they have everything they need in life and then after their education, they want to push you to get married. I always make jokes because my Mom is really adamant about me getting married. I say, 'Mom, leave me alone!' I feel like it is more of a community thing, especially if once your age is like 25 or 26 and you are not married, it's like, so is your daughter getting married any time soon . . . That's the main thing.

The majority of female youth in this study repeated similar sentiments; all expressed awareness of the parental obligation to ensure their marriage, even though they may or

may not be open to an arrangement. This apparently precludes any other choice of lifestyle, such as living singly or in any other alternative partnership, which is addressed in a later chapter.

Acceptance of Arranged Marriage

According to Netting, Indian families in North America today “use a modified version of the traditional arrangement; it’s not called arranging anymore, it’s called suggestions” (2006:135). As this scholar explains, “Parents put the word out, once a child’s education is complete, letting relatives and friends know their child is ready to marry” (2006:135). By approaching the process in a less threatening manner, children may be more open to an arrangement, and more willing to accept someone who is recommended, especially if they are fully engaged in the process (Jain 2008; Netting 2006; Khandelwal 2002; Gupta 1999b). In this way, the ‘arrangement’ begins with suggestions from parents, relatives or friends, and the prospective bride or groom then proceeds with meetings, interviews and evaluations of candidates. The process that Jivin described earlier in this chapter is an example of this; he went to India at the urging of his parents, met candidates who were vetted by relatives, and ultimately selected his bride.

Many youth agree (55%, $n = 97$) that an arranged marriage would be acceptable to them if they can participate in the process of finding a suitable candidate; however, 26% ($n = 46$) disagree with this and 19% ($n = 33$) are unsure. Many adults (69%, $n = 93$) also agree that an arranged marriage would be acceptable to their children if the child participates in the process of finding a mate, while 12% ($n = 16$) disagree with this, and 19% ($n = 26$) are unsure if an arranged marriage would be acceptable, even if children participate in the search process.

Sajani (15, Jain) indicated that she fully expects to have an arranged marriage because dating is out of the question for her at least until she is ready to marry, since it is not part of the culture in which she has been raised. She stated that she made a conscious decision to respect that, and she does not want to go against her culture. While discussing dating and her eventual marriage, our conversation turned to her expectations for the future and concerns of her parents:

Sajani: Years will pass and I guess my parents will deal with it when I'm 18 and I'm about to marry. I'm still young, so maybe when it is ten years later, maybe things will change.

Dianne: What things might change?

Sajani: They know that I know I have to do an arranged marriage; that is the tradition and culture for so many years so, when the time comes, I don't want to just marry someone that they choose; I want to have a say in it. If they find someone, and I agree with that person, then it will be OK.

Dianne: What are your parents' concerns? Are they concerned about maintaining or losing traditions?

Sajani: They might be because we live in America and children do go bad; they don't follow their traditions; a lot of my friends don't follow their traditions. They (parents) do have their worries that I am living here and I might lose them, but so far I really haven't.

Dianne: What has prevented you from losing traditions?

Sajani: I go to India and I see how people do it (arranging marriages) and it helps me. I am Indian and I want to follow the traditions. I don't want to forget what I am.

Rashina (17, Catholic) also is open to the possibility of an arrangement:

In regards to arranged marriage, I don't think I would have a problem with it if my parents presented me a person and I liked him. It's not like my parents finding someone versus me finding someone. I just want to find someone and really experience that true love kind of thing. I don't want to just marry someone just for the sake of their stature. And, I don't think my parents would ever pressure me into 'this is the person you are going to marry;' that is just not the kind of family that we are. My mom says, 'There's a bunch of people in the Jersey church that you need to go and meet,' so she is looking at it from the perspective of who can see me in the future. I

am looking at that, too. I know arranged marriages have a high statistic of working out, but you only live once, and I definitely want that love experience. With marriage traditions, well, I think our generation has certainly broken the boundaries of arranged marriages, especially in America. Most of us certainly are not expected to have our parents go and find someone for us. I think the parents are very lenient on who we get to see. We can go out to find someone but he has to be a nice Indian boy who is Christian, who is religious, has a good name; who is probably going to be a doctor, because that is what 90% of the Indian community is.

Prabir (17, Hindu) on the other hand, indicated his first preference to find a match on his own, but if that doesn't work out, he too is open to allowing his family to intervene and assist him in finding a bride:

It is definitely someone I should meet and find for myself; but, if worse comes to worse, I'd rather my parents arrange it or family help me select a partner, as opposed to doing something like online dating or something like that in order to find someone. The parents should really be an important part of the process and in the relationship. I should find someone I really trust and someone I think we can have a long relationship with.

Indian-American youth are not rejecting the notion of arranged marriage nor are they viewing it as antiquated or irrelevant. In fact, they are open to participating in the process and to accepting persons as possible mates who are suggested to them by family or friends (also noted by Gupta (1999); (Leonard 1999); Rangaswamy (2000); Khandelwal (2002); Netting (2006, 2010), Jain (2008) and Giridharadas (2011). However it is clear that they want to have a voice in the matter, and to exert their agency in the process. Nonetheless, the process may be variable for them depending upon several factors, including but not limited to the extent of involvement of parents and family members, the breadth of autonomy that they have in decision making, religious considerations, and the range of family expectations to follow specific traditions.

Finding a Marriage Candidate and Choosing a Spouse

The way that young Indian-American men and women will find a potential spouse

may not be so different than that of their non-Indian counterparts. They may meet in any number of ways, perhaps through school, employment, social events, community or church engagement, and introductions through mutual friends or family. However, the persistence of arranged marriage continues to be evident through the use of matrimonial advertisements in North American ethnic Indian newspapers and through posting profiles on various Internet sites (Khandelwal 2002; Kalyanam 2004; Netting 2010). These advertisements and profiles describe various characteristics about the marriage candidate, including appearance and educational and occupational backgrounds. Khandelwal notes that these are typically “used to reach a wider pool of eligible persons than traditional social networks might be able to cover” (2002:155). She adds that some Indian immigrants also place advertisements in newspapers in India to further expand the pool of prospective spouses, and if there is success in locating someone, then personal visits to India to follow up on potential candidates are made.

Additionally, families might use their own personal social and business networks as well as caste directories to locate a marriage candidate for their sons or daughters (Netting 2010). Once proposals begin to arrive, which typically contain detailed biodata, photos and horoscope, parents and youth discuss them together, and families then start to use their networks to exclude prospects based on problems (such as health or personality issues) that may be uncovered through their investigations (Kalyanam 2004; Netting 2010).

Use of Internet to Find a Bride or Bridegroom

Youth and adults were asked their opinions on the usefulness of the Internet for locating potential spouses. Even though both adults (mean = 3.09) and youth (mean =

3.20) lean toward agreement that arranging a marriage is easier and better today because of the Internet and the availability of several matchmaking websites ($t = 0.91$; $df = 297.16$; $p \geq .05$), nonetheless, they may not be inclined to use them. Only 8% ($n = 14$) of youth and 25% ($n = 34$) of adults agree that matchmaking websites are good tools for finding appropriate potential spouses, and that they would use them to find suitable partners. Many youth (62%, $n = 109$) and several adults (39%, $n = 53$) disagree that matchmaking websites are good tools for finding appropriate potential spouses and that they would use them. 30% ($n = 53$) of youth and 36% ($n = 48$) of adults are unsure about the usefulness of matchmaking websites, and whether or not they would use them to locate suitable partners. Abhinav (37, Hindu), provided some insight into how the Internet might be used in this regard:

I think people are using these more than before, but I don't think the local people of India are using them. People like we are, like some half of the family is here; some of the family is there, then they try to match people. It is still a big deal to be in the US for Indian families and Indian people. What happens if a boy is working in India, they would try to find an Indian family over there; or they would try to find a boy for their girl who is in the U.S. already and that is when they would use websites like that.

Kopal (17, Hindu) commented on how technology is changing the way things are done with matchmaking. She is open to using a matchmaking website, and shared the story of her uncle who is in the process of trying to find a mate:

It is a changing world that's for sure; it is not like it was 20 years ago. I think the whole technology drive that has been going on in the last 20 years is going to be a big, big impact, especially like *eHarmony* and *Perfect Match*,²⁷ and how you could just possibly find your soul mate through the Internet, and that is a big factor, too. It definitely influences where I find my soul mate or how I do. I know for my uncle especially; he is just a work driven man and he is 35 years old and still is not married. But, we put his portfolio up on eHarmony and he has been trying to find every girl possible. He has got at least seven profiles on seven different web sites. His mom,

²⁷ eHarmony.com is a popular online dating website. PerfectMatch.com also is an online dating website that recently ceased operations.

my grandmother, is helping sort through them. My grandmother is just dying for another grandchild. She is trying to speed up the process as quickly as possible.

Anna (18, Christian/NC) expressed her displeasure with advertising for a spouse:

The Indian websites and the whole idea of putting an ad in the newspaper that my grandfather has done for my aunt, I don't agree at all. First of all, (1) you never know what's the truth; (2) even when you meet them, what do you know is the truth; (3) you only know how genuine they are after you marry them. So I don't agree with it. If you want to find someone who fits you, you'll meet them. I don't think it is the right approach. I don't really think they are helpful. I don't really want to be matched to the person like that.

Siya (21, Other religion) discussed her older sister's prospects for marriage and her parents' role in trying to find a spouse for her:

They are trying to arrange a marriage for her - she's 24 - but obviously she doesn't feel comfortable getting married to those people. So, they have been trying to get her into some South Asian marriage, social network thing, like a website to set up a profile. My parents keep tabs on that in terms of trying to get a profile and they are the ones who contact the people. I think my sister doesn't really take that seriously; but now she is trying to take it seriously, because she's 24 now and getting to that age (of expectation to marry).

These comments indicate a range of views on using the Internet as a tool to locate potential marriage candidates, and these youth have a sense of the advantages and disadvantages of online matchmaking. It appears that web based dating sites likely would be used in tandem with other means of networking to find a suitable candidate for marriage.

Parent or Child: Who Should Decide?

In arranging a marriage, it is often assumed that parents have more knowledge, life experience and relationship skill, and therefore they are better equipped to choose a prospective spouse for a son or daughter than he or she may be capable of doing (Gupta 1999b; Seth 2008). According to Gupta, young South Asians usually are not considered adults until they are married, regardless of chronological age and therefore, "the parental

generation believes it is the best judge of potential partners for their children” (1999b:121).

Youth and adults were asked about this, as well as whether or not youth are best equipped to choose a spouse because of their own knowledge of self and life experience. The majority of youth in this study (75%, $n = 132$) agree that they have sufficient knowledge of self to be best equipped to decide upon their future marriage partners without input from others, but 8% ($n = 14$) disagree with this, and 17% ($n = 30$) are unsure. Parents seem to be less sure about whether their children will have sufficient knowledge of self and life experience to decide upon their future marriage partners without input from others. While 35% ($n = 47$) agree that their children will be best equipped to make their own decisions about selecting a future spouse, 39% ($n = 53$) disagree, and 26% ($n = 35$) are unsure.

Furthermore, 67% ($n = 118$) of youth disagree that their parents are better able to choose a marriage partner for their children because of their knowledge, experience and skill. However, 15% ($n = 26$) agree that their parents are better equipped to choose a marriage partner for them, while 18% ($n = 32$) are unsure. Many parents (48%, $n = 65$) disagree that they are better able to choose a marriage partner for their children, while 29% ($n = 39$) agree that they are better able to do this, and 23% ($n = 31$) are unsure about this. From these statements, it is evident that youth want parents to acknowledge their ability to select a spouse with minimal assistance. Yet, youth also desire their parents’ approval in decisions they make regarding dating and marriage, and they acknowledge the authority of parents to participate in their future marriage decisions, thereby hinting at

some inconsistency in these responses. These findings will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Gehena (45, Jain) said that it doesn't matter who her children marry, or who chooses the spouse for them:

For me, where my kids are concerned, it is just important that they be smart about it; that they be compassionate; whoever they choose to marry, I really don't care - race, creed, whatever. It is somebody they respect and in turn respects them. And my hope, and I don't know if it is going to come true, is that the families get along because in our culture, you don't get married to the person, you get married to the family - that's my only hope . . . We have told them that it is totally up to them. If they come home and say we want you to look for a spouse and we want you to do this, then we will do whatever we can in our power to help them. If they choose to find somebody and they come home, we are going to be OK with that, too.

Jeyati (36, Hindu) and her husband Chandak (39, Hindu) explained that there is more support for a couple in an arranged marriage, because families are more vested in a successful outcome, since they are responsible for making the match. They indicated that if a love marriage fails, the blame and responsibility are on the couple, rather than on the family.

Chandak: For arranged marriage, families are there to help, and the total focus is between husband/wife, boy/girl. The families can provide a lot of support.

Jeyati: On the other hand, if a boy and girl find each other as in a love marriage, the family doesn't have much obligation or duty to help. They are more on their own.

Raizel (53, Christian/NC) discussed her counsel to her daughters regarding how to prepare for selecting a spouse:

The only thing is that I want you to write down the values that you want in that husband. Will they be a good Christian, like we want? What job? Stability, financial stability. What kind of family do you want to get in all of that? All those things, your values, the three or four things that you cannot give up; write that down, and see whether the person whom you want to marry meets that. It is not really easy. Attraction can happen really fast, but to see the values and seeing whether that will work out is very important. She understood that I'm not against her finding someone.

Although Kopal (17, Hindu) agreed that she feels capable of finding a spouse on her own, she is appreciative of the insight her parents might be able to provide when she is ready to make that critical decision:

They give the other perspective. If I am in the lovey-dovey stage, they will give me that other perspective and open up another eye to what I am not seeing; and I would like them to be involved because they know what is best. I mean they know what is best for me and I think that they should see who the person is and really be like, OK, yes! I can check him as my son-in-law. He is going to be a good fit for my daughter; he will treat her right and everything. Especially for my Dad; I think he will definitely know because he is the one who has been raising me; the one who has been providing me with whatever I ever wanted or wished for; so, I think he really knows.

Typically the arranged marriage process is deliberate, practical and structured, with the goal to determine if a shared future is possible for the couple and the families (Gupta 1999; Rangaswamy 2000; Kallivayalil 2004; Kalyanam 2004; Netting 2006, 2010; Shankar 2008). Most often, the parties involved in securing the arrangement will look for compatibility in backgrounds that include similarities in the elements described in the next section.

Matching Elements: What Is Important in a Prospective Spouse

Indian marriages traditionally have been endogamous, and arranged marriages have been based primarily on similarities of religion, caste, class, region and language (Gupta 1999b; Kalyanam 2004; Netting, 2010; Singh 2010; Goli, Singh and Sekher 2013). Other factors also are examined in the spousal matchmaking process, including level of education and settlement in a secure career as markers of status and future income; personality, character and moral traits; adaptability to family; common interests, and even compatible horoscopes (Kalyanam 2004; Seth 2008; Netting 2010). Once matched, partners (particularly the brides), are expected to adjust to one another after the marriage,

even if there are discrepancies in personal interests and habits, which are not considered as important as other elements of the match (Gupta 1999b; Seth 2008).

Goli et al. state that in India, socio-economic transformations as well as the influences of western education “have led to enormous change in the existing pattern of choosing one’s life partner, and marriage practices” (2013:193). These authors also indicate that the number of inter-religious and inter-caste marriages in India has doubled in the last two decades, although there is significant variation among the states, and overall, the number of mixed marriages is small. Nonetheless, elements that were once considered imperative to matching potential spouses are no longer absolutes for parents in India or the United States in arranging or approving marriages, nor are they regarded as essential to Indian-American youth when they ponder their future marriages.

DeSouza et al. (2009) add that with globalization, Indian-American youth will face cultural dilemmas regarding who they choose to marry, and how they make relational commitments. These scholars indicate that barriers to selecting mates from other backgrounds are slowly breaking down. However, as youth will have access to a more diverse pool of partners from which to choose, they will encounter questions regarding “their motives, their perceptions of identity, their allegiance to country, caste, culture and religion, as well as their personal rights to make decisions about all of these matters” (2009:23-24).

In the survey, both youth and adults were asked their opinions regarding elements they deem important to match when choosing a spouse. Participants rated the importance of matching caste, class, religion, socio-economic status and education, since these are the typical elements that are evaluated in potential matches (Kalyanam 2004). Additionally,

both groups were asked if it is acceptable to marry non-Indians. Their responses to these survey questions and accompanying narratives are discussed in the following sections.

These are introduced by the story of one of the adult couples, which exemplifies typical parent-child conflicts that can arise when there is disagreement over the importance of matching specific elements prior to arranging a marriage or accepting a proposal.

Conflict over Matching Elements

Among the many stories of arranged marriages that adult participants contributed to this study, the narrative shared by Joita (43, Hindu) and Nirvash (42, Jain) illustrates the clash of generations over the importance of matching specific elements between potential spouses. Although theirs was a love marriage, the union of Joita and Nirvash began with significant personal struggles due to conflicts they faced with their parents, who did not approve of the caste, religious and dietary differences between them. Joita and Nirvash knew one another since they were teenagers; their families were introduced to each other through the sale of a business between their parents. They kept their friendship to themselves because they were keenly aware that neither sets of parents would accept it due to the fundamental differences between them. When love blossomed between them, they found themselves in quite a dilemma, because Joita's father expected that upon completion of college, she would return to India to marry a boy whom he had selected for her. At that point, Joita had to confess to her father that she wanted to marry Nirvash. Her father did not take the news well, and refused to speak to Joita for two weeks. Nirvash's parents also reacted negatively to the news. Joita and Nirvash provided this overview of their marriage process, followed by how they counsel their own children regarding what to look for in a potential mate:

Nirvash: I think when Indian parents are of similar religion and similar culture, they feel that has a stronger bearing on a relationship lasting. That is the old Indian culture that they feel. They went through an arranged marriage, so they're looking at how do you keep things common, because then there are less things people will have a disagreement about . . . They were always looking at it from the standpoint that if you keep things common and you know the family, that breeds a lasting relationship - not necessarily based upon pure love - because I think that is the mentality of the Indian culture; so that is why they were saying, 'Well, she is not the same religion or caste,' or 'the last name was different,' in the sense that it has different cultural bearings. When you look at India, there are all these class structures in the sense of a certain name means something; another name means another class structure, your socio-economic status, your education - all those things are what an Indian parent would always look at. So it was all of these things and based on everything except love, because that is all they could measure. So, that is how they based a successful marriage . . . In the beginning it was difficult for my parents because they had a certain expectation; it is all about expectation. After a while they got used to it; they understood it; there was really no choice at that point.

Joita: Plus, he is an only child, so it was more difficult to accept. They had their hopes and dreams on this one child. That was very difficult for them to accept! . . . Class, caste, was still in the back of their minds. Education level was the same; we were fine with that; but it was mostly the religion.

Nirvash: Dietary differences, too.

Joita: He comes from a vegetarian family; I come from a non-vegetarian family but I have switched to vegetarianism since we got married just to make it easier for his family, and it was fine with me. At the point that our families realized that we were serious, they called each other and decided to have a meeting.

Nirvash: We did horoscopes, too.

Joita: Oh, yeah; horoscopes; most Indians, especially the older generations, believe in horoscopes; so they did my horoscope and did his horoscope; they get an astrologer to say would these two people match if they got married. The horoscopes came out positive; so at that point, my father was ready to accept it because the horoscopes came out in our favor; and, his parents actually came to slowly accept. I mean it took years for my mother-in-law; I would say it took a good solid eight to ten years before she fully came around. Not till we had our first child did she fully come around . . . My family accepted him more easily, but his family did not readily accept me.

Nirvash: For our kids, when it comes to religion, we don't dictate anything. I think what we are basically saying is, you do want to pick someone who has an education background similar to yours; you want to pick someone you can be able to relate to and they can relate to you. We do want them to pick someone who is Indian, but we do not dictate what religion. But at least be someone on their same status of

education. To both of us, it is important that they're within equality of each other, and then I think just looking for people that are coming from a good family, that they are not coming from a family which doesn't have good morals; we would want to make sure that their children are brought up in a good home, one that lasts, not one that gets broken up for whatever reason. Those are probably the basics that we tell them.

From the standpoint of youth, many of the respondents indicated that compatibility of specific elements would be expected by their parents, particularly marriage within the Indian race, though not necessarily within the same caste. Rashina (17, Catholic), reported opinions that were echoed by many other youth in the study:

They just told me that you need to find someone who is very compatible for you education-wise, someone who can provide for you; someone you can lean on and someone you can grow with. They always say that you have to find someone compatible in those respects; you can't have someone who just looks attractive because that is an added bonus, but you also have to have someone who can protect you and care for you when they are not there anymore. My parents want me to marry Indian, definitely. My Mom has always said, 'I want a nice Indian boy.' I really value my religion, so I would never marry someone who wasn't Christian; I prefer Catholic, but my Grandma has always said, 'A nice Indian boy who is Catholic and is from Kerala.'

Caste

India's unique caste system is an organized form of social stratification with hierarchical status and social inclusions and exclusions based mainly on birth, occupation and region (Mullatti 1995). This author notes that castes have existed for the last 3000 years, and the number of castes and sub-castes are in the thousands. She further states that until India's independence in 1947, the caste system divided Indian society into distinct and "extremely segmented groupings, governing and covering all areas of not only individual's but also family's socio-cultural and religious life." (1995:16). Dube states that although caste is still one of the basic institutions of Indian society, "the norms governed by the basic characteristics of caste have undergone dilution during the last few decades, but they have not disappeared and still remain the typical identifying marks" of

Indian society, particularly Hindu society (2001:173). Castes also can be described as extended kin groupings, which stratify religious communities into various endogamous groups (Mullatti 1995). Caste rigidities have minimized considerably since independence, but the politicization of caste is still widespread in many areas (Béteille 1993; Mullatti 1995). Nevertheless, Shankar (2008) notes that although caste is downplayed in every day social interactions and there is little overt talk about it in modern Indian-American communities, it still factors heavily into arranged marriages today. Leonard (1999) indicates that caste endogamy or marriage within another regional kinship group ensures that new couples will share similar backgrounds and lifestyles, and thus minimize differences between them as well as provide them some degree of approval and status.

Although these scholars point out the importance of caste in Indian society as a whole, both youth and parents in this study indicate that they do not regard caste as an essential factor in choosing a spouse. Youth (mean = 2.03) disagree more than adults (mean = 2.66) that caste is important when choosing a spouse ($t = 4.83$; $df = 306.49$; $p \leq .05$). Highlights of comments on caste from youth indicate that other factors are more important to them and their parents. Both Shilpa (15, Hindu) and Sabita (17, Hindu) indicate that their parents do not emphasize the importance of caste in selecting a future mate:

Shilpa: I don't know if we're still about the caste system. I'm in the top one, the Brahmin caste, but I don't think that matters as much as the actual religion and morals, so I think they definitely care about that a lot more.

Sabita: In terms of marrying within or outside of my religion, ethnicity and caste, I don't really know what I want to do. My parents obviously tell me, you have to marry somebody who has a good job and can provide for you, somebody who is well

educated; that pretty much is the extent of their expectations. I feel like they are really open; they don't have any restrictions in that respect, not with caste at least.

However, Sonya (19, Christian/NC) feels that her grandparents might have some objection if she married outside of her caste:

My parents probably are going to want me to marry someone who is Indian, but they would not care if we are not the same caste. I'm pretty close to my grandparents, but they'll probably be closed to something like that happening. They probably would say he has to be from the same caste and from the same state, so it is going to be pretty crazy if it is what's known as a mix.

Ketav (20, Hindu) shared feelings of ambivalence about marrying within his religion and caste:

I am Hindu and from the Brahmin caste; that means that I am sort of from the priest caste, so the rules for us are somewhat different; we can't drink alcohol and we are pure vegetarians. I would probably try to marry into the same caste or religious group; so I am trying to look for a girl who is also a Brahmin. It is more important to my parents than it is to me, but at the same time I think they themselves aren't sure; they know the culture and they have adapted pretty well to American culture, so they themselves aren't exactly sure what they should do. I guess there is supposed to be some confusion; you have to try to make a compromise between American practices and Indian practices and somewhere in between you will find something that works.

From the parental point of view, Vanita (36, Hindu) and her husband Abhinav (37, Hindu), said that they likely would be much more open with their children about whom they could marry, based on the experiences that they shared leading up to their marriage.

Vanita: We are from different castes and that was a little hard. The first thing my parents said was, 'Is this boy from the same caste?' I say, 'No, he is not.' And they say, 'OK, then don't go too close to him; stay far away.' And I say, 'OK.' So that is the difference. I don't know, but I think now it is changing a lot.

Abhinav: This is how things were in India at that time; I'm saying that time because things have changed since then. The caste system is so overpowering that people don't want to look beyond it.

Although caste endogamy still is important in Indian marriages, Chauhan (2007) argues that class has become a very significant variable, and its importance as a desirable

element in arranging a marriage is increasing.

Class, Socio-Economic Status and Education

According to Chauhan, “income, education and occupation are the hallmarks of the class phenomenon” (2007:10). In her study of bride and bridegroom requirements that are listed in matrimonial advertisements, Chauhan (2007) found that categories of specific income ranges, educational degrees and professional occupations are at the forefront of desirability, in addition to beauty for women and personality for men. It appears that caste has become less significant than class for many who are seeking a suitable match.

Respondents in this study considered the importance of these requirements in the matching process. Regarding matching class as an important element to consider in choosing a spouse, youth (mean = 2.41) disagree more than adults (mean = 3.03) that matching class is important when selecting a future mate ($t = 4.31$; $df = 293.62$; $p \leq .05$). Socio-economic status appears to be more significant to adults (mean = 3.44), who agree more than youth (mean = 2.91) that matching socio-economic status is important when choosing a spouse ($t = 4.14$; $df = 305.47$; $p \leq .05$). Similarly, educational level is more crucial to adults ($m = 4.03$), who agree more than youth ($m = 3.75$) that matching educational level is important when choosing a spouse ($t = 2.68$; $df = 307.84$; $p \leq .05$). Overall, it appears that these three categories have more significance for adults than they do for youth. However, several youth indicated in their interviews the desirability of some of these elements in a future mate. Prabir (17, Hindu) was clear about his requirements:

I do have some prerequisites, such as similar educational level to me; that is something that is especially important to me. Their religion and culture are extremely important

to me. Things like caste and social economic status, I have no regard for that; that doesn't matter to me, but I want my priority to be able to provide for myself and my family regardless of whether my wife works or not.

Several of the female youth voiced strong opinions on the importance of being on a par educationally with their future husbands. Siddhi (19, Hindu) has plans to become a doctor, and her boyfriend, whom she expects to marry, also plans a professional career in law. She said,

It would definitely be that first, you must be educated. Education should be notched, right there with me, if not higher; that is the thing my parents value a lot; education is the first thing. They don't care where you come from; who your parents are; they could care less about that. The person has got to be educated. Second is being respectful and appreciating others' culture.

Anna (18, Christian/NC) similarly puts education at the top of her list of traits that she wants her future husband to possess:

For me, they need to be really educated because they need to keep up with me. Next, is that they have to have, not so much an economic status, but they just have to be very well educated in the sense that I am a very math and science girl; I like it when they are at my level; I like challenging myself. I want to find someone with a similar passion. He doesn't have to be in science or math; he can be in English or a history buff. He has to have at least that similar passion. Something that drives him to want to do something; make some sort of a difference.

Sabita (17, Hindu) also wants a partner who is her educational equal:

I have to have somebody even more or similarly educated to me. I have to be able to have conversations with this person; it can't be a superficial relationship, whereas, they just aren't interested in the same things I am, or don't have the same level of motivation as I do. I really need somebody who is kind of intellectual and is able to hold a conversation, able to talk to me.

Throughout conversations with both youth and adults, one topic that did not surface in conjunction with these elements of potential mate requirements is dowry, which still is a

common practice in India, despite legislation to stop it.²⁸ Dowry also can be part of an arranged marriage in the United States (Leonard 1997). Singh states that “dowry has gained social legitimacy across all communities and regions,” and “it may be regarded as a functional imperative for family formation in contemporary India” (2010:24). Kumar asserts that education for daughters is “perceived as functional to the objective of her getting married” and that “educated girls hold a better prospect of finding a ‘good’ husband with whom parents can negotiate a smaller dowry” (1991:148). However, none of the adults in the study discussed negotiating or expecting a dowry as part of their arranged marriages. Likewise, none of the youth expressed any interest in or knowledge of dowry. Participants were not questioned directly about dowry in the survey or their interviews; however, it is worth mentioning in this section because of the potential for added value to the negotiated amount for prospective mates in areas where dowry is still imposed. Larger amounts of money or expensive goods may be demanded for marriage candidates with higher education, prestigious jobs or other perceived value-added characteristics; or if both parties are relatively equal in what they offer, lower amounts of dowry can be accepted. There is no indication in this study that Indian-American adults participated in giving or receiving dowries at the time of their marriages. That it was not mentioned may be due to several speculative possibilities, including that it did not occur

²⁸ Dowry, also known as the bridegroom price, refers to a lump sum of money with or without tangible assets such as gold, jewels, furnishings and other household items, which constitute an essential part of wedding negotiations and settlement. Often viewed as a status symbol of increasing prosperity, dowry is transferred by the bride’s household to her prospective husband before the actual wedding ceremony. Dowry still is considered socially legitimate in Indian culture despite the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 (further amended in 1986), and continued legislative measures to ban the practice. When dowry amounts are considered insufficient or demands are not met, brides may be subjected to abuse, harassment and torture. Dowry violence and death are not confined to specific groups, and these continue to be persistent, serious issues in Indian society (Singh 2010; Ravindra 2013).

for them; or perhaps it is too private, or maybe they are embarrassed by it. Similarly, none of the youth brought it up, due to the possibility that it is not in their realm of experience or desire. In opposition to Singh's assertion that the custom of dowry is socially legitimate even in modern times, Ravindra (2013) states that it is considered archaic, inappropriate and degrading in the new millennium, and that it should be completely eliminated. Perhaps that is why dowry was strikingly absent from all of the conversations.

Religion

The Indian-Americans in this study primarily identify as Hindus, but some are Christians or Muslims, or belong to other religions not as widely represented in their culture. Religion supplies a structure for grounding specific spiritual beliefs and behaviors related to marriage and fundamental family values, and it institutionalizes marriage within a moral and spiritual framework. It exerts influence on constructions of marriage that have become open to controversy in post-modern times. Religion informs a variety of marriage tenets and expected behavior toward them, such as duty, responsibility, obligation, commitment, roles of partners and parents, cohabitation, divorce, chastity, intimacy, sex, and especially important to the welfare of children, the issues of procreation and parenting. All of these topics are relevant to youths' development of ideas about marriage, and in the Indian collectivist context, they may have distinctly different meanings than in the American individualistic context, which may result in confusion for them, and in bewilderment for their parents who attempt to instill traditional beliefs in them. Nonetheless, marriage is considered a sacred relationship in all of the religious belief systems represented in this study. The following

paragraphs describe very basic principles of each religion related to marriage and family.

Williams states that the “Hinduism of immigrants is a constellation of diverse elements” and “there are no generic Hindus; everyone comes with a regional, language, and caste identity . . . belonging to a particular community which venerates a historical teacher and which worships a particular god or goddess” (2009:150). He elaborates further, stating that “parents turn to religion and religious practice as a significant way to maintain their identity and create an Indian consciousness among their children” (2009:151). In Hinduism, marriage is an obligatory duty (dharma) (Smith 2001).

Hinduism focuses on the centrality of the parent-child relationship, especially that of father and son (McLemore and Browning 2009). Additionally, Hinduism places a very high premium on the family and the importance and value of children as a product of marriage. Courtright describes the principal role of marriage in Hinduism:

For many centuries, as far back as textual sources take us, marriage has been a central concern in the Hindu tradition. It is the cornerstone of society, the link between the past and the future, the source of well-being and children, and the pivot of social life. It is not surprising, therefore, that even in the context of contemporary global pressures that bring dramatic changes in ways of life for Hindus, both in India and abroad, it is marriage that continues to be the most sustaining center of gravity for Hindu life. (2006:232)

According to Smith, one of Hinduism’s core beliefs is that by forming and maintaining a family, “a man and a woman fulfill some of their most important religious duties – to themselves, to one another, to their ancestors, to society and to posterity” (2001:91). Particularly significant is that “in the Hindu religious tradition, one’s very salvation is often said to hinge on a timely and proper marriage and the production of offspring” (2001:91). With this link to eternal salvation, the importance of endogamous

marriage to Hindus is understandable. In contemporary Indian-American society, these beliefs are still honored (Singh 2010).

In Christianity, marriage also is considered sacred, with life-long commitment and focus on the family (Johnson and Jordon 2006). But in contrast to Hinduism, Christianity has elevated the importance of the husband-wife relationship, and lessened emphasis on the extended, inter-generational family (McLemore and Browning 2009). Johnson and Jordon (2006) delineate five specific themes in Christian teachings on marriage and family which include fidelity, reproduction, mutual self-giving, self-control and concern for the social order. They state that “Christian marriage is a worldly matter,” and a “well regulated marriage” is important for a stable society (2006:87).

In Islam, marriage is a solemn covenant, which is carefully regulated by a body of laws (Al-Hibri and El Habti 2006). The Qur’an provides guidelines for living a good and rewarding life; it “defines the marriage relationship as one based on tranquility, mercy and affection,” and states that in a marriage, “the couple must live together amicably or part in kindness” (Al-Hibri and El Habti 2006:152). These scholars note that “consensual relationships are a hallmark of Islamic law, whether in the family, society, or the state” and “in the realm of the family no spousal relationship may be formed without the proper consent of the prospective spouses” (2006:168). However, American Muslims differ in the extent to which they understand the stipulations of the Qur’an to be normative for them in matters of male authority over the family (Smith 2009).

Many adults voiced their respect for the religion that guides their lives, and the survey results indicate that adults (mean = 3.97) agree more than youth (mean = 3.34) that it is important to match religion when choosing a spouse ($t = 4.67$; $df = 308.00$; $p \leq .05$).

Dave (42, Christian/NC) and his wife, Noora (38, Christian/NC) indicated that their faith is important to them, and they often are involved in church activities. Dave stated that he and Noora “are very particular on the point of wanting only Christian boys” for their daughters. Further, Dave said that a “major stipulation is a commitment to family that is grounded in faith and church teaching.” Sejal (41, Hindu) and her husband Ashwesh (44, Hindu) also put high importance on religion, explaining that it is a significant component in their marriage. They want their son to value religion as well, and indicated that they expect he would marry within the faith. They make sure he is exposed to Hindu religious and cultural practices through bi-weekly gatherings at their temple. Sejal explained,

We have a program every other Sunday. It is run by the India Temple Association. They teach our culture, religious things, yoga, and everything, so he keeps learning new things that we cannot sometimes teach because we do not have that much knowledge of everything. He gets good knowledge of everything in Indian culture and the religion from that. They stay together for almost one hour; they pray together and they get to know each other every other Sunday; so, it is a big help. We want him to keep that close; we work very hard for that, definitely.

Nidha (44, Hindu), also expressed her desire for her children to consider matching religion when her children marry:

All our celebrations, a lot of our family values, everything is based upon religion. The religious and cultural festivals, with all the colors and celebrations are important to us. My daughter is traditional and she loves all of this, but my son tends to be more non-traditional. I think my kids do believe in God and I do more too, in terms of following religious things, even more than my husband does. I follow a lot of traditional beliefs so I think that it's important for my kids and who they marry too.

On the other hand, Gehena (45, Jain), said that she feels her children should be able to choose whomever they want as a spouse, regardless of religion or race:

We didn't have the choice, but we don't regret that or have any ill feelings towards our parents; but we feel that the kids should have the choice to do what they want. We are

going to be OK with that – if they are not Indian or not the same religion that is going to be perfectly fine with us.

The viewpoints of youth about the importance of matching religion as an important element in choosing a spouse also reflect differing opinions. Mohita (20, Hindu)

expressed the significance of the role of religion in her life as it relates to how she lives:

Religion does play a big role in who you can be with. For me, it really does shape my values and what I expect, and what I want to be or how I want to be, even though I don't call myself religious. I think to have an Indian religion is kind of mixed in the culture; so, you don't actually know you are religious until you sit down and actually analyze it. Religion isn't really just going to temple; it is almost the way you live; a way of life; that is the Hindu religion.

For Adam (19, Catholic), it seems that his parents care more about matching religion than he does, and he predicts possible conflict about matching specific elements:

I don't care about the race or religion or any of that stuff, but I'm pretty sure my parents would. I guess I can see a conflict because we came from Kerala, so they want someone from Kerala and someone Catholic. But I can't really guarantee that the person I find is those things, but my parents really want them to be Catholic and they want me to marry someone who is Indian. They would get along better and they would have more in common. My parents are pretty religious; they want their grandchildren to be Catholic; I feel like if I don't marry someone at least Christian, that could be a pretty big conflict. I think I should be serious about it, but I am not sure about doing an arranged marriage. But I know the traditions are important to them.

Kruthika (20, Hindu) expressed her wishes, with specific reference to the history of conflict between Hindus and Muslims:

As long as he is Hindu and Indian, I don't care, but it is a parent thing, especially since I grew up during the time of the Hindu/Muslim riots. They would rather me marry twenty White guys than one Muslim guy. My parents know that I have friends who are Muslim, which is OK, but at the end of the day if I was to marry one of them, they would get very upset. I think it is going to be a generational thing where the next generation is going to push this away. Even with other Indian parents it is normal; they will have that little bit of hostility towards people who are Muslim in comparison to people who are Hindu. So yes, religion is important.

Although these snippets provide a very brief overview of the importance of matching religious beliefs in potential mates, other factors may be considered when determining how significant religion may be in determining the suitability of a particular match. Other considerations may include an examination of where one is on the spectrum of beliefs; how religion may be significant as a conduit for transmitting culture; what scope it has in daily living, and what role it plays in constructions of marriage. Scrutiny of the depth of these issues would be valuable when evaluating religion as a necessary element in choosing a spouse. Another consideration is to analyze the use of the term “Hindu” and differentiate exactly how that is defined; is it defined in terms of the religion or in terms of the culture? To say that one prefers a Hindu as a potential mate has broad meaning, and the term likely would need further clarification when determining elements to seek in a potential partner.

Marrying Non-Indians

While Indian-American youth may date and relate with many people from other races and ethnicities, Shankar states that “the desire to preserve the racial exclusivity of their community along with their religion, caste and language is shared by teens and adults alike” (2008:186). In discussions with Indian-American teens in her study, Shankar found that among interracial unions, “Desi-White unions are the norm;²⁹ youth seldom speak of dating African Americans or Latinos” because that would “potentially cause even more tension in their communities” (2008:186). The reasoning is that marrying a White person would enable upward mobility, and the “largely silent prejudice against African American and Latino unions underscores the negative valuation of these

²⁹ Shankar (2008) defines ‘Desi’ as the Hindu term for ‘countryman’ and it refers to South Asians who live outside of the Indian subcontinent.

communities and the threat they pose to preserving and improving Desis' socioeconomic position" (2008:187). When youth respondents in her study spoke of the possibility of marrying a non-Indian, they mentioned only a White American, perhaps because doing so would ease assimilation into a primarily White society. However, just a few of them said that race didn't matter to them, implying that a person from any race would be acceptable to them. Youth respondents also indicated that their parents would have more difficulty accepting a non-Indian spouse, which seems to point to the desire to continue to maintain ethnic purity.

Arnett claims that "despite the increase in interethnic marriages, for the most part, people still choose love partners from within their own ethnic group. One reason for this is that emerging adults often find love partners from their social circle, and their social circle usually consists mainly of people from their own ethnic group" (2015:90-91). Arnett further states that another reason for marrying within one's ethnic group "arises from an awareness of cultural differences between ethnic groups and a feeling of being more comfortable with what is familiar" (2015:91). In his study he found that while emerging adults did not admit to racism as a reason for not dating and marrying outside their ethnic group, they freely shared that their parents had clearly expressed prejudices that conveyed to them that they should marry only within their own ethnic group.

In response to the survey question about the possibility of marrying a non-Indian, youth (mean = 3.77) lean more toward agreeing that it is acceptable to marry non-Indians than adults (mean = 3.28), ($t = 3.97$; $df = 305.83$; $p \leq .05$). The following comments provide greater insight into parental views. Sangetta (49, Hindu) discussed her experiences of youth, and her wishes for her children to marry an Indian:

My parents definitely wanted me to marry an Indian in the same caste so that would go along with maintaining tradition; somebody with similar values. Duties – well, basically we always knew that they expected me to marry Indian, but prior to meeting my husband, I was seeing a White person. My father was not happy about that; there were a lot of conflicts in the house, so we broke up. For my children, I always hope that they will marry Indian; that they stay within their culture. I try to explain that marriage is a big commitment; it takes a lot of work; the less difference you have, the better. You have to go with someone who has similar values. It is just not enough that they are Indian.

Girvan (62, Hindu) has a son who recently married an Indian girl, and he hopes that his daughter will marry a Hindu with Gujarati roots. He expressed concern for the next generation regarding the possibility of interracial and inter-caste marriage:

Both of my kids value the Indian culture and they believe in arranged marriage, and the influence from the parents. But I don't know what is going to happen to their children, the third generation; it is hard to predict by the way things are changing; they may allow their children to find their own partner and go for inter-caste marriage or inter-race marriage.

Shaira (45, Hindu) expressed a more liberal view, stating that she is open about who her children may choose:

Parents place a lot of priority on education and culture. I don't even have any strong feelings in terms of who you shouldn't date. I think I am really liberal and open-minded and so is my husband. Often the true test is when you are actually faced with all of these things. Hopefully, we will all rise to the occasion and we will be embracing of whoever it is. I would hope that growing up here, having the benefit of seeing different cultures and still getting the very Indian traditional feelings and upbringing, that they will be considerate, caring people in whatever relationships they choose to have.

Youth presented views on both sides of the issue. Some are clear about wanting to marry within their race, while others voiced their willingness to risk parental disapproval and marry outside of their race. Shilpa (15, Hindu) was very succinct her response: "No! It is not OK to marry non-Indians. I would never do that!" Rena (16, Hindu) also definitely sees an Indian spouse in her future:

The reason I want and hope that my spouse will be Indian is because I hope that my children would be raised up the way I was. Because both of my parents are Indian, I am completely surrounded by Indian culture; I know two Indian languages fluently. I'm so into Indian culture, Bollywood songs and stuff like that; dressing up in Indian clothes; I just love all that. I want my children to have that, and I don't know if it would be that easy marrying someone who isn't Indian, because I am sure they would want their children to be exposed to their culture also. That is my hope, and my worries too; I just want my children to be raised up the way I was, with all the Indian culture.

Prabir (17, Hindu) validates Arnett's (2015) viewpoint regarding the ease and comfort of marrying within one's own ethnic group:

I feel more of a connection to other Indian people. It is easier to foster a relationship with someone who is acquainted with everything that you are acquainted with; raised similarly to you. I really want to marry someone who is Indian . . . I just don't feel the same connection to people that aren't Indian that I do with people that are Indian. The marriage is like the marriage of both families. If both families have the same viewpoints and cultures and traditions, I feel like it is a lot more likely that the families will mesh together and there will be a stronger relationship there.

Anna (18, Christian/NC) raised concerns that being matched with a boy who still lives in India could cause problems regarding her personal expectations of autonomy:

I don't care if he is Asian or American; I don't really care. My parents are probably going to say he has to be Indian. He has to come from the same state I come from, and speak the same language. So, they might not be particular to say that we have to be from the same caste but I think they are definitely going to see if he is Christian and if he is Indian. I think that is probably going to be important to them . . . If I marry a guy right out of India, I think we will have a lot of problems; I don't know how much freedom he will give me. But, if I do marry an Indian it is probably going to be someone who was born and brought up here, or someone who moved here at an early age. I feel like a lot of Indian guys are not that open minded about things. They are really possessive and very controlling, and I don't think I can live like that.

Sonya (19, Christian/NC) expressed concern about what might happen if she marries a White boy, and her parents' potential reaction:

About getting married to someone Indian, my parents would probably prefer that; and, when it comes to that, I'm going to be in a lot of trouble. When it comes down to it, if I do end up marrying someone who is American - White - I think they are going to be very upset. I honestly don't know how that is going to turn out and I hope they can

accept it. I feel like a lot of Indian parents who live in America have that fear of their children marrying someone who is not Indian; I think they are secretly dreading it.

Shilpa (15, Hindu) stated that her parents would be opposed to her marrying a non-Indian boy because they feel that commonality of race and religion between spouses would make relating with one another easier:

I know that my mom wants me to marry an Indian boy, but we've never really discussed what would happen if I'd want to marry someone who wasn't Indian, and not in my religion. My parents would definitely have something against it. . . it's just because they want me to marry within people that I know so that I could relate to them on that level, like religion and family, like we can all get along because of that, like common things.

The commentary in these excerpts points to themes of desiring to preserve ethnic purity and traditional culture, ease of assimilation into families with similar characteristics, and the degree of Indianness that a person exhibits, as Anna noted. As second generation Indian-American youth evaluate their potential mate choices, they also will have the filter of their dual identity as Indians and Americans as they consider these points. This may have some bearing on their disposition toward interracial marriage if they wish to consider candidates from a wider pool of Americans.

American Influences upon Expectations of Arranged Marriage in the 21st Century

The influence of American culture upon Indian-American youth is one of the key factors contributing to how they develop attitudes about the marriage and family life they expect to have in the future. As they face issues of parental support or rejection of their ideas, hopes and wishes for the future, the degree of this influence upon them is open to examination and discussion. In the previous chapter, evidence was presented regarding parental concern about the influence of western culture upon the construction of youths' opinions and practices of dating. Delving further into the question of this influence, both

adults and youth were asked if the influences of American society regarding issues of relationship and marriage are more negative than positive. The survey results indicate that both adults (mean = 2.97) and youth (mean = 2.77) lean toward disagreement that the influences of American society regarding issues of relationship and marriage are more negative than positive ($t = 1.75$; $df = 267.36$; $p \geq .05$). This finding appears to be somewhat incongruent with the fact that many parents develop and implement strict rules for their children to guard against negative influences of western culture regarding dating, as reported in the previous chapter. It also seems to contradict the hard line parents take toward alternative lifestyles that are acceptable in American culture but at odds with Indian culture, which are discussed in a later chapter. However, because this question does not pinpoint specific influences, it is difficult to discern the root of the incongruity in the response.

Further exploring the question of the influence of western culture upon attitudes about marriage, 43% ($n = 76$) of youth agree that though their parents might want them to follow the tradition of arranged marriage, they think that the influence of western culture would prevent an arrangement; nonetheless, 37% ($n = 65$) of youth disagree and 20% ($n = 35$) are unsure that the influence of western culture would be a factor in preventing an arranged marriage, even if their parents wanted them to follow that tradition. Adults' response to this question was more variable; 34% ($n = 46$) agree, 37% ($n = 50$) disagree, and 29% ($n = 39$) are unsure that the influence of western culture might prevent their children from following the tradition of arranged marriage, which perhaps reflects a broad range of thinking and uncertainty in attitudes about the reach of the influence of western culture on this matter.

Additionally, more than half of youth (68%, $n = 120$) in the study disagree that they expect their future marriage to be arranged or semi-arranged, even though they are allowed to date and relate with the opposite sex; however, 15% ($n = 26$) agree and 17% ($n = 30$) are unsure about this. Many parents (56%, $n = 76$) also disagree that they expect their children to have an arranged or semi-arranged marriage, even though they allow their children to date and relate with the opposite sex; on the other hand, 30% ($n = 40$) of parents agree that they expect their children to have an arranged or semi-arranged marriage and 14% ($n = 19$) are unsure about it, even though their children are permitted to date and relate with the opposite sex.

Conversations about these survey questions pivoted toward the topic of choice as illustrated by the following snippets from discussions with youth and adults. Niketh (18, Hindu) shared his thoughts regarding the clash between parental pressure and the influence of western culture that youth sometimes feel:

Some of the challenges are going by personal choice. A lot of families do influence kids; their parents will drive them to be successful, which is not a bad thing at all; but it will start to get in the way of that person's true happiness, maybe by trying to vicariously live through their kids. Just by trying to decide who they are going to marry is getting in the way of their child's personal true happiness. Then kids put so much stress on pleasing their parents more so than doing what really makes them happy; so again, choice.

Mohita (20, Hindu) spoke about being careful in her decision making regarding dating and marriage, suggesting that she does not feel deprived of experiences that may be prohibited for her, but allowed for her western counterparts:

To be completely honest, I feel like I have a lot of choices and I have the freedom to make choices on my own, but I wouldn't do a lot of the stuff that my parents wouldn't let me do . . . so I don't find it tempting to do certain things. Even if I see some of my western friends doing it, I won't judge them. My reasoning is I shouldn't do it. I don't feel like I am restricted or I don't have the freedom to make a choice. By the

end of the day, if I still want to do something, I can do it; they won't harass me because I did. I am definitely a little more careful than a lot of others, westerners.

Jivin (47, Jain) framed his comments by talking about his preteen son and the variety of entertainment choices that are available to him. Jivin cited the need for constant movement from one activity to the other, and the transient gratification it provides as characteristic of western culture. He feels that young peoples' need for continual and ever-changing stimulation has the potential to shape their future relationships. Jivin worries that this might lead to intolerance or boredom within a relationship, thereby not preparing youth for the tenacity to stick with a relationship over a long period of time:

When I watch my son and the kids that he plays with, they jump from experience to experience, which means that they won't stay steady or question if it is OK to have nothing to do. They always have to have something, and that something always has to be enticing, enthralling, something that they enjoy. Stimulating, right? So then, I suspect that as he gets older that is not going to change, so when he goes out and dates and looks for partners, whether it be for wedding or whatever, that's the stimulation he will look for. What's next, and what's next? So, they will struggle in the first part of their married life because they will get it in the short term; but then in the long term when the thrill is not there, then there will be that itch, and then what? Now you need the next experience, and then that breeds discontent with married life. My guess is that divorce rates are simply going to get higher, and to have a long term marriage is going to be the minority. So having divorce rates is going to be OK and having step-kids and step-brothers and all that is the new norm . . . It is always this exposure to something new. I think that is going to shape their relationships and it is worrisome.

Each of these comments point to the dilemma of choice, which is a central consideration in arranged marriage. Along with choice, Indian-American youth also are confronted with issues of surrender to cultural tradition and family expectations, as well as matters of trust in the wisdom of elders who may become involved in arranging a marriage for them. Yet, they have been raised in American culture, where there is a penchant for variety and individual freedom to make choices, which makes arranged marriage seem totally incompatible with western beliefs and practices (Iyengar 2010).

There is an assumption that having choice is good, and having more choices must be even better (Iyengar 2010). Yet this is not necessarily true, as Iyengar states that in fact, “more choice leads to less satisfaction or fulfillment or happiness” (2010:178). Conversely, if in the search for a mate one must think about matching all or most of the elements that have been previously described, there may be constraint in the demand and supply equation. Choices may be more limited, and compromise may be necessary, which then may become the source of conflict and emotional distress. Although on the surface there may be the illusion of choice with plenty of options for mate selection, one might be reduced to feeling almost like there can be lack of choice too, for a myriad of reasons.

Emerging Themes and Questions for the Future

The survey responses and interview data in this chapter reveal that arranged marriage is still acceptable and relevant to the participants in this study, yet many questions linger regarding how Indian-American youth and their parents will resolve struggles that are inherent to the process. It is clear that youth definitely want to have a choice regarding whom they marry, and if they do have an arranged marriage, it likely will be quite different than the arranged marriage of their parents and relatives. While the youth respondents in this study are not overly concerned about matching every specific element that may have been considered important in their parents’ mate selection processes, nonetheless, they are influenced by their heritage, and it is important to them to find someone they deem compatible not only with themselves, but with their families of origin too. How willing they are to marry outside of their culture and religion, and how that influences their sense of self-identity and ability to function seamlessly within the Indian community remains to be seen. The level of risk they are willing to take regarding

compatibility with self, family, community and Indian society at large will be a highly individual decision. However, the youth seem keenly aware of this, and they have for the most part indicated that relationships with family and community are highly valued, perhaps lessening the likelihood of selecting a partner that would be unacceptable.

Although many of the adults shared views that appear more progressive regarding mate selection for their children, they nonetheless also highly value their Indian heritage and traditions, and they want these to be passed on to their children in the areas of marriage and family. However with the tacit understanding that youth want to assert themselves in the mate selection process, and perhaps even be fully responsible for it, the role of parental involvement in actually arranging a marriage for their children may be reduced to only superficial or symbolic participation. The willingness of Indian-American parents to accept a much lesser role in their child's mate selection process may be tested and may be a sore point of conflict, especially when children marry later because they are working toward achieving higher levels of educational and professional advancement. Parents may struggle with changing expectations and as Gupta pointed out, they may "have a difficult time comprehending the redefinition of boundaries that occur when their children become adults in the eyes of mainstream American culture" (1999b:143).

As marriage in western culture is expected to fulfill a diverse array of needs for the couple and the individuals who constitute the couple, the question arises regarding whether or not Indian-American youth also will have the same expectations for their future marriages. Will their purpose for marriage shift from focus on the creation and care of a family to higher expectations of self-growth, personal fulfillment, and equalized

power within the marriage relationship? Additionally, will the once taboo subjects of desire, romance, intimacy and sex become an accepted part of conversations among young Indian-American couples as they consider their marriage prospects?

The pressure on Indian-American women to be the standard bearers of tradition in their culture has not dissipated, but as female youth have grown up with a bicultural identity, it may be easier for them than women in the previous generation to combine both traditional and contemporary values and to integrate them within their newly created family structures once they marry. Having been raised in a culture that demands equality for women, they may not be willing to be quite so submissive to parents and to future partners. They will want to identify themselves more by their own achievements and by the families they create, rather than be defined in terms of their relationships with men. Nonetheless, they may face challenges with conflicts related to gender roles and cultural expectations that have been ingrained through the patriarchal familial structure in which they were raised, which naturally influence their choices and behavior. Their ability and readiness to adjust to all of these things undoubtedly will contribute to how they approach mate selection, marriage and family responsibilities.

In the next chapter, dilemmas of choice in making decisions about potential mates and the emotional conflicts that are attached to them will be explored. Issues of disclosure, privacy and inter-generational communication in the context of decision making also are addressed.

Chapter Five: Choice and Disclosure: Who Decides Whom I Marry and How Do We Talk About It?

The Indian-American youth in this study have grown up surrounded by the tradition of arranged marriage. Many of their parents and relatives were matched through traditional arrangements and have enjoyed successful marriages. Hence when they come of age to consider marriage, they may be confronted with dilemmas of yielding to the recommendations of parents and extended family members who might want to arrange their unions. They may acquiesce or rebel if faced with relinquishing personal agency for the sake of appeasing parents and maintaining marriage traditions. They may question how their best interests are considered when others are selecting a potential mate for them. Young Indian-American men and women also may debate whether or not they know themselves well enough to make a good choice of their own accord, since many marriages within their families have been arranged by others.

As Rangaswamy (2000) stated, “The second generation of Indians has grown up in American schools celebrating ‘choice’ as a birthright, while the first generation is worried about mixed marriages and cultural erosion. Too often they fail to see each others’ viewpoints” (119). The assertion of personal autonomy related to making choices in social life, dating and ultimately marriage is an important consideration for Indian-American youth. As they mature and step into the realms of socializing, dating and relational experimentation, conflicts with parents and lack of disclosure about their activities may be inevitable. These issues can be difficult for youth to manage depending upon where they and their parents are on the continuum of choice. So how will Indian American youth address issues that arise from their desire to choose their mates?

As some scholars have noted, parental input is no longer paramount to making ultimate decisions about dating behavior and mate selection; young Indian-Americans are pushing toward having greater autonomy with dating, and making their own decisions regarding potential marriage partners (Ravindra 2013; Singh 2010; Manohar 2008; Netting 2006; Rangaswamy 2000; Gupta 1999b). These youth have been exposed to compelling models of romantic relationships which provide self-fulfillment, and many of them desire to incorporate aspects of these models in their future marriages. Second generation Indian-Americans definitely want to consider an updated version of ‘arranged’ marriage in which they can actively participate, but by the same token, they also continue to desire parental approval and blessing of their decisions (Ravindra 2013; Netting 2006; Rangaswamy 2000; Gupta 1999b). And while parents may sometimes “connect self-chosen marriage with premarital sex, pollution of high castes by lower ones, and abandonment of family obligations, . . . youths can respond that Indian principles are compatible with individual choice and human rights” (Netting 2010:710). They recognize that the need and desire for choice is universal, and the ability to choose for oneself is a prime and powerful means to control one’s environment, and one’s life (Iyengar 2010).

According to Smetana, decisions by parents to grant children personal choice are dependent upon many factors, which primarily are their “assessments of the environmental risks entailed in exercising those personal choices,” and their appraisals of the “adolescents’ abilities and competencies,” which may be “particularly variable and divergent during periods of rapid developmental change” (2002:76-77). Furthermore, Smetana explains that “discrepancies between children’s developing competencies – or

children's over estimations of them – and parents' assessments of those competencies are likely to lead to conflict" (2002:77). She notes that the developmental and social changes of adolescence typically lead to renegotiating the limits to autonomy, particularly as teens spend more unsupervised time away from home, and as their friendships transform into romantic relationships. These in turn lead to increased parental concerns about dating, premature sex, and the influence of peer groups, which are evidenced in participants' responses (2002:77-78).

In her explorative work on the art of choosing and the potential paradoxes of having too many choices, Indian scholar Sheena Iyengar states that while there are considerable differences between Indian and American cultures, there is one particular feature of culture "which has proved especially useful for understanding how the ideas and practice of choice vary across the globe: the degree of individualism or collectivism" (2010:30).

Smetana points out that

Children in a range of cultures develop concepts of personal choice, and mothers in these cultures endorse independent decision making as a means of developing the child's competence, agency, autonomy, and self-esteem. Autonomy is of concern to parents in cultures that have been considered collectivist as well as individualist . . . for many culture theorists, autonomy has been equated with an orientation toward individualism, uniqueness, and a sense of self as detached from others (2002:79).

However, both Smetana (2002) and Iyengar (2010) note that autonomy is not necessarily commensurate with only individualistic values. Moreover, Kagitcibasi (2005) states that emotional separation and agency are associated with individualistic cultures, and emotional interdependency and lack of agency are characteristic of collectivist cultures, but cultures which are in transition may endorse what she terms as autonomy-relatedness. Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier (2002) found in their extensive meta-analysis that individualism and collectivism do not fall on a single

dimension; they claim that Americans are not only individualists but also relational, with closeness to group members, though not necessarily duty-bound to groups.

In her examination of culture, autonomy and personal jurisdiction in relationships between parents and adolescents, Smetana stated that “although individualism and collectivism represent ideal types, in actuality, cultures may vary along a continuum. Different cultures may strike different balances between individualism and collectivism, with elements of both evident to varying degrees in different societies” (2002:55). Furthermore, Smetana indicates that individuals of any culture can be collectivist in some situations and also be individualistic in others; they may value autonomy while simultaneously stressing the importance of maintaining traditions and group goals (2002:55). She concluded that “appeals to personal jurisdiction reflect adolescents’ attempts to claim an arena of personal discretion and choice, and thereby to assert a subjective sense of agency and construct a coherent self-identity,” which is required to become an independent adult in their cultural setting. (2002:66). Moreover, Smetana states that adolescents’ “negotiations, resistances, and challenges to parental authority are selective and developmentally functional,” and these can lead to the construction of new social conventions with the potential to change cultural practices (2002:82). Adding to this, Helwig agreed that “as children develop skills and abilities related to psychological needs for self-expression and competence, they will claim areas of autonomy related to the exercise of these abilities, in accordance with the possibilities afforded by different cultural environments” (2006:459).

Iyengar adds that the question of whether people consider what is best for themselves and what makes them happy, or if they regard what is best for themselves as well as the

people around them “lies at the heart of major differences between cultures and individuals, and both within and between nations” (2010:30). She further notes that where people fall on this continuum is “very much a product of our cultural upbringing and script we are given for how to choose” (2010:30). However one focuses primarily on the “we” or the “I” when making a decision, Iyengar asserts that these cultural scripts not only help one to successfully navigate life, but also perpetuate “a set of values regarding the way in which society as a whole functions best” (2010:30). Indian-American youth are brought up with scripts that emphasize the importance of family and they are expected to consider the good of the family when making decisions.

In addition to cultural scripts about decision making, Mazur (1993) writes that scripts for attitudes toward marriage and divorce may be developed as early as middle childhood, depending upon socialization processes, and parental role modeling. As children and adolescents absorb the transmission of information from numerous sources in their social spheres, their thoughts and cultural beliefs about marriage are further developed and influence the decisions they make in adulthood.

According to Netting (2010), it is quite feasible that by finding a common ground which respects views of both parents and youth regarding choice, culture, and family values, new possibilities for intergenerational negotiations may result in modern and distinctively Indian methods of selecting a mate. In this chapter, I examine several questions about Indian-Americans’ notions of personal choice and individual autonomy as they relate to the arranged marriage process: What are the beliefs and values of youth regarding their desires for participation in selecting their future mates? What are their thoughts about carrying on long-held marriage traditions? How do youth communicate

with parents and peers about these important concepts? And how do they handle issues related to choice and autonomy including trust, disclosure, emotional expression, and intergenerational conflict? What are the thoughts and feelings of Indian-American parents regarding their children's desire to choose a mate and to exert autonomy in the process? Where are the intergenerational points of agreement? All of these issues are examined in the following sections, which highlight the attitudes of both youth and adults regarding these important questions.

Parental Approval and Authority in Matters of Dating and Marriage

Regardless of socio-cultural backgrounds or religious beliefs, good parenting includes assisting children to make wise decisions. As social conditions continue to change at a rapid pace, as peer pressure is heightened, and as technology continues to penetrate private spaces, the challenge for parents to keep children on track can be daunting. As noted in previous chapters, Indian-American parents often are quite involved in setting rules for premarital activity regarding dating and social life, with heavy emphasis on the protection of daughters, preservation of virginity, and maintaining a respectable family reputation. Parents are highly concerned about protecting their children from the pitfalls of reckless relationships or behavior that can damage character and the family name (Singh 2010; Manohar 2008; Shankar 2008; DasGupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Maira 2002; Rangaswamy 2000).

To what extent parents should be involved in their children's decision-making is a contentious point for most families with adolescents and young adults. Parents struggle with many concerns about their duties in guiding children, including the degree of involvement they should have, the offering of solicited or unsolicited advice, and the

constant striving to strike a balance between interference and valid concern when advising their children about school, career and relationship decisions. It is often difficult for parents to resist protecting their children from making mistakes, even though they may sometimes need to err in order to grow and learn.

Additionally Supple, Ghazarian, Peterson and Bush state, “while autonomy granting is undoubtedly a key element in the promotion of psychosocial well-being for adolescents in individualistic cultures, there is debate regarding the applicability of the autonomy [granting] process to youth in cultures characterized by collectivistic cultural patterns” (2009:817). These authors note that in collectivist cultures, traits such as “group harmony, respect for elders, interdependence, and conformity to parental expectations are viewed as signs of successful child socialization” (2009:819). Greater emphasis is placed upon these attributes, rather than “independence, self-esteem, autonomy and individuality” which characterize socialization in individualistic cultures (2009:819). The ways and means through which adolescents acquire autonomy from parents can vary immensely between cultures as well as be dependent upon many factors, including the educational levels of parents and the meanings ascribed to the concept of autonomy (2009:831).

With consideration of these points, youth were questioned about the importance of parental approval in decisions that they make in the context of dating and marriage. A very high number of youth (83%, $n = 146$) agree that it is important to have their parents’ approval about such decisions, while only 8% ($n = 14$) disagree and 9% ($n = 16$) are unsure. Additionally, more than half of youth 59% ($n = 104$) agree that their parents have legitimate authority to participate in decisions about their future marriages, but 23%

(n = 40) disagree and 18% (n = 32) are unsure that that their parents have legitimate authority to participate in decisions about their future marriages.

Yashvi (15, Hindu) summed up her views, which are similar to those expressed by many other youth on this topic:

Arranged marriage for me is that your parents are involved more, but you still have a choice. For traditional Indian marriage, there are ceremonies, and whether you fall in love or not is another thing. There is a fine line between your parents getting involved completely and you having the choice.

Dianne: What is that fine line?

Yashvi: The parents forcing is beyond an arranged marriage. An arranged marriage to me is your parents are involved in the process of picking the person, but you also are involved, and you get to have a say whether you want to or not. In a marriage that is not arranged, it would be that parents would approve, but you are also in love with the person, so it is mainly you, but your parents still approve. I would expect my marriage to come about out of love because I don't really believe in the whole completely arranged marriage; but, I do want my parents to be involved and to have their absolute approval because their opinions are the most important to me.

Kripa (17, Hindu) stated that she welcomes parental input into major life decisions because her parents allow her a fair amount of freedom. She indicated that they are in agreement regarding the level of authority that her parents currently impose:

I feel I have a lot of freedom in my choices because my parents have that trust in me that I am not going to do something that they don't want me to do. They do give me a lot of freedom, and I do follow their rules and regulations for that. I want their approval when it comes to a decision like marriage.

The majority of parents (73%, n = 99) in this study agree that they have legitimate authority to participate in decisions about their children's future marriages, but 18% (n = 24) disagree and 9% (n = 12) are unsure that they have legitimate authority to participate in decisions about their children's future marriages. Adults also were asked if they feel it is their duty to control and manage their children's choices regarding associations with members of the opposite sex. The adults responses on this matter are

evenly divided; 43 % (n = 58) agree that they have a duty to control and manage their children's choices regarding associations with members of the opposite sex, while 43% (n = 58) disagree, and 14% (n = 19) are unsure.

Nidha (44, Hindu) expressed confidence that her 16-year-old daughter “knows her limits” regarding decisions, because “that is always discussed in the background.” She indicated that for now she wants to have control over what her daughter does, as well as have some management of her circle of friends. Nidha also stated that she and her daughter enjoy a warm and close relationship, so her involvement is not perceived as interference or threatening in any way:

Maybe as a full-fledged adult, I won't have any control, but right now we are also very good friends. She can confide in me anytime; she knows it. I have told her my stories of growing up; she loves to hear those stories. That really helps. I hope it will continue as she gets older, when she eventually decides about marriage.

Gehena (45, Jain) agreed that parents have authority to participate in their children's marriage decisions, although she would not necessarily exercise that. She felt that children should have a lot of freedom in major life decisions, particularly marriage:

Yes! It is a very good thing because if you were to look at our situation you would think because we didn't have the choice, we would feel bad. But we don't regret that or have any ill feelings towards our parents. But I think even though our situation turned out well, we feel that the kids should have the choice to do what they want to do. It is totally up to them.

Elaborating further on the above responses, both youth and adults indicated the importance of parental approval regarding a future spouse. Many youth (69%, n = 121) agree that their parents must approve of who their future spouse will be, while 17% (n = 30) disagree and 14% (n = 25) are unsure. Additionally, more than half of adults (54%, n = 73) also agree that they must approve of who their child's future spouse will be, but 26% (n = 35) disagree and 20% (n = 27) are unsure that their approval of their

child's future spouse is required. These findings are similar to those in Netting's study with Indian-Canadian youth. None of her participants "believed they would marry if their parents continued to disapprove. Many spoke critically of elopements, emphasizing that in India, children and parents need each other throughout the entire course of life" (2006:717). Netting (2006) also discussed how parental acceptance of a future spouse affects the dynamics with the couple and within the family. She noted that participants believed their parents would not help overcome problems or get as involved with their children if they were in "self-chosen marriages," based "more on physical attraction than on enduring characteristics" (2006:717). These were "seen as leading more often to divorce, because of diverse backgrounds and unrealistic expectations" (2006:717).

As she shared additional details of her swiftly arranged marriage, Sarvi (56, Hindu) talked about the importance of family involvement and respect for the feelings of the collective whole:

The whole family is involved in the marriage and they want it to last long-term. Because we've known my husband's family also, if I had a conflict with him, and if I just said, OK, I'm leaving, I would be so concerned about how I would affect *their* feelings, because I know them. You would think twice before you would do something that's in your mind, because at that time you are so angry that you are ready to do whatever you think is right. But when it comes to the whole family being involved, and how much you would hurt them, you would think twice before you would do something like that. Of course when you think back, you think, oh my God, how did I even think in those terms? So I feel that because the family is involved, and the family is known, *it matters*; and those things will hold you back in making these drastic decisions that might hurt you and them later on.

Sarvi's comments suggest that her family has expectations about the importance of regulating emotions. She conveys acute awareness of how her actions would affect not just herself, but also both her family, and her husband's family. In this way, she underscores the cultural mindset of doing what is best for the good of the whole family,

even if it requires putting aside personal feelings.

While indicating that she would be open to an arranged meeting with a potential spouse, Shilpa (15, Hindu) stated that she would want her parents' blessing regardless of who she marries:

I want to get to know them (potential arranged matches). I just can't marry someone I don't know. But I don't think I want to marry anyone without my parents' blessing. I don't like that; I'm an only child, so they're all I really have. What they think is important to me.

Siddhi (19, Hindu) discussed which Indian marriage traditions she felt should be maintained, and she emphasized the importance of parental and familial approval:

I think the thing that should stay the same is the approval of parents and family. It is true that when you get married you are also marrying the other family. That is one of the traditions that my Mom has always expressed to me. When you get married, you are not just marrying the person; you have to marry the family. You can't be like, I don't like his grandparents; I'm not going to talk to them; that is not how it works. So approval of both families is important.

Similarly to Sarvi, these comments from Siddhi suggest that she is very aware of how her actions and decisions may affect not only her family, but that of her potential spouse.

Her understanding of 'how it works' refers to the mindset of considering others as well as oneself in important decisions.

Parental Involvement in Choosing a Future Spouse

Utilizing parental guidance in helping children to choose a spouse may have both positive and negative effects. Indian-American parents often view their participation in their adult children's marriage process as a moral duty rather than interference. It is their obligation to offer honest and unbiased advice in order to ensure their children's happiness and success in making a life-long commitment (Kalyanam 2004; Rangaswamy 2000). This particular family value and tradition holds a prime place of importance in

Indian-American culture, since parents play a very influential role in shaping the future for their children.

When children come of age to marry, parents may have confidence that their children can discern whether or not a potential match is suitable. On the other hand, parents also may be aware of their children's weaknesses, and they often are concerned about their ability to resist the tug of attraction toward a possible mate that may not work out in the long run. The struggle to provide just the right amount of advice and guidance can be like an emotional tightrope at times, with parents trying to balance their input with their keen observations and opinions of what is right for a son or daughter who is considering a potential mate.

Parental input can be recognized positively, as a tremendous source of support rather than a cause of burdensome conflict. Since parents want to see their children achieve a fulfilling, long-lasting marriage, their involvement in selecting a future spouse may be viewed not only as a cultural duty, but also as a culmination of love for them, as the final obligation that must be performed in raising their child. It is a duty borne of unconditional love and of desire to maintain dearly held family values.

Parental involvement in marriage decisions is not likely to be extremely diminished in the near future, according to the survey results which indicate that nearly half of youth participants (47%, $n = 83$) agree that they want their parents to be involved in choosing their future spouse. Some youth (28%, $n = 49$) disagree and 25% ($n = 44$) are unsure that they want their parents to be involved in choosing their future spouse. Adults were asked if parental input should be important to children in choosing spouses. Overwhelmingly, parents (91%, $n = 123$) agree that parental input should be important to children in this

regard, while only 3% ($n = 4$) disagree and 6% ($n = 8$) are unsure, so it is clear that parents definitely want to maintain their involvement in helping children choose future mates, while youth are more split in their viewpoints. These numbers suggest that this second generation of youth may be leaning toward desiring more autonomy in their future marriage decisions, while parents want to hold on to their role in assisting children in this important decision. Nonetheless, some of the youth expressed the value of parental input:

Anna (18, Christian/NC) noted that her parents' blessing and involvement in her mate selection is important to her:

I definitely don't think my parents are going to force me to do anything that I don't want to do. Given that, I think the choice is mine, not theirs. But obviously I want their input and I want their blessing; I want them in the process of everything.

Kopal (17, Hindu) similarly expressed positive regard for her parents' input, but also noted significant generational differences in their mate selection experiences:

Really it is my choice, but I respect my parents' decisions. I would like to date and choose, but American parents have actually been raised up having dated; my parents haven't. They went to school, they got their college degree, and they have been in an arranged marriage. They never dated; they never liked anyone; they never had that tradition or ritual. They've come to America and they are like, oh well, this is completely different; and, when I started doing it, it's just like, whoa! We never did that; that is completely different and we are against it. So that is a struggle, but I really value their opinions and inputs.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion of youth who wish to have parental involvement in choosing a future spouse, Sonya (19, Christian/NC) described herself as very independent and stated that she wishes to marry whomever she chooses. However, she also expressed concern over her parents' reaction if she decided to marry someone who did not meet their requirements:

I'm really up front with them. I realize that I am going to probably hurt them and crush their dreams, but I feel like it is better to do it now, rather than let them dream on, build up expectations that were totally unnecessary. If I don't say anything they are going to assume I am OK with their expectations. I want them to know I am not OK with it . . . My view is that when I do find someone and if that person is not Indian, then I want them to approve what I am doing. But I am not really going to be asking for their permission. I do want them to approve and I want their blessing, but I'm going to follow my heart.

Sarvi (56, Hindu) discussed parental involvement in marriage decisions, and how she and her husband talk with their daughter about possibilities for her future marriage:

My daughter, she's the marrying age now; she's 26, so we have talked to her, and she herself had done a project on arranged marriage when she was in high school. She had actually researched quite a bit on it, and she herself had come up with the conclusion at that time that if it works, it really works well, because there are less issues when you have the same religious backgrounds. Another thing I think she came to the conclusion is that in the short term, when the kids look for a match, they look for fun and they don't look long-term, whereas when the parents look for a match for them, they are thinking long-term. And that's my thinking also, that when parents look for a match, it's always they look in the long term, because they have experiences from being older, I guess. But my daughter was always OK with it, and we were always open with her. If she has someone in mind, than we have no problem at all . . . she goes out, and we recommended a few boys also, and she has gone and met with them. She doesn't mind talking to them or finding out if it would work or not. It hasn't worked out so far, but she has been OK with that, and we've been OK that if she finds someone that she likes, we are open to that also. There are no restrictions, like points where this is it, you can't go beyond this, or you have to be like a Hindu, nothing like that at all. Education is important. We would definitely be looking at that. But it's totally their choice referring to both her children. We just always felt that we are there for you, but if they decided on something, they would talk to us and then make the absolute final decision.

Abhinav (37, Hindu) explained how parental involvement in spouse selection has operated in India when he was getting married, and the traditions that have carried over to parental attitudes here:

It was not considered good; you are not really raising your child well if that kid is going out to choose someone for themselves; it is as simple as that. It does not matter your caste, it does not matter your wealth status or your social status; it is just that if your kid is finding somebody for himself or herself, then that falls bad on you and the family that they did not raise you well. This is how it was there.

Each of these passages illustrates what is reflected in many of the adults' and youths' thoughts about the importance and necessity of parental involvement in marriage decisions. With adults, there appears to be a softening of stance regarding how they discuss marriage decisions with their children. While it is very important to them that their children welcome their guidance, they also recognize that their children desire some independence in the decision process. Similar to other parents, Sarvi's comments suggest gentle guidance rather than rigid rules; Abhinav recognizes the harsh judgments that existed at the time of his marriage, and later in our conversation, he made it clear that he will not enforce strict rules with his children regarding their choices of marriage partners. Parents' opinions are part of the larger decision making process, and youth recognize the value in that. For youth, parental blessing and approval are prominent in their comments; even for Sonya who insists that she will do things her way, there is cognizance of the importance of parental consent. Overall, these remarks suggest again the theme of considering the well-being of the family as a collective whole when making important marriage decisions. This is further illustrated in the following section.

Considering Input of Extended Family in Addition to Parents

Although the contribution of knowledge and opinions of parents may be important to an adult child's marriage decision, typically in an arranged marriage, other family members or close friends also may be consulted before making a final decision (Kalyanam 2004; Rangaswamy 2000; Gupta 1999b). Indian families customarily believe that by involving parents and extended family members in the spouse selection process, there is greater likelihood of finding a mate who will be most compatible with everyone, and not simply match on specific elements that initially may be required. By sharing the

burden of responsibility with other family members for ensuring a successful marriage, parental input may be further validated, and objectivity in decision making may be more certain. This approach also would create a wider circle of support for the couple, and perhaps provide a sense of greater compatibility as the families are merged through marriage (Seth 2008; Gupta 1999b).

The question of whether it helps or hurts to add layers of opinions of others in crucial marriage decisions can be confusing, especially to the potential bride or groom, who are reminded that they are marrying not only each other, but into their respective families as well (Kalyanam 2004). Questions of neutrality may arise regarding strength and consideration of particular opinions. The potential couple also may wonder if additional layers of wisdom, experience and opinions will result in more peace of mind or further confusion, if there is any lack of agreement (Kalyanam 2004). Ultimately, the match must address and satisfy the greater good and best interests of both families.

Survey and interview data reveal that a significant percentage of youth and adults value the input of extended family into future marriage decisions. A high number of youth (72%, $n = 128$) agree that the thoughts and feelings of their parents and extended family are important to consider when they make choices related to their future marriages; however, youth were evenly divided in disagreement (14%, $n = 24$) and being unsure (14%, $n = 24$) that it's important to consider the thoughts and feelings of their parents and extended family when they make choices related to their future marriages. Essentially the same percentage of adults (74%, $n = 100$) also agree that they want their children to consider their thoughts and feelings and those of the extended family regarding choices related to their children's future marriages. Some adults (16%, $n = 22$)

disagree and 10% (n = 13) are unsure that they want their children to consider their thoughts and feelings and those of the extended family regarding choices related to their children's future marriages.

For the most part, participants in the study affirm and value intergenerational relationships with parents, grandparents and extended family. Youth asserted their support of considering the feelings of both parents and extended family when they are ready to choose their future mates. Rena (16, Hindu) validated her endorsement of familial input into her future marriage:

The opinion of my whole family and parents is definitely important. I hope to find someone who is basically my best friend and we should love each other, obviously. Definitely I want my parents to approve, that is most important to me to make sure that my family is happy because if my family isn't happy, I won't be happy. It is important for me to keep my connections with my family; that is really important for me.

Kruthika (20, Hindu) expressed her concern about family rifts if there was lack of agreement on her choice of future spouse:

If it came down to marrying someone your parents or family didn't like, how would you do that? Would you defy your parents or would you go with the person? That is a really difficult question to answer because my parents mean the world to me, and just the way my culture is; it is not really OK to just abandon them. I've seen it on TV shows and even in families, some couples who haven't talked to their parents in years because they ended up married to someone that their parents didn't appreciate or didn't approve of. I wouldn't want that because I want my parents to be in that part of my life. I think it would be a really strange situation if I had to take someone over my family. I don't think I could do that. I don't want to call it an obligation, but it is a part of me, culturally. I do understand trying to keep the culture alive, and I do feel it would be easier for me to marry an Indian person. At the end of the day, you need your family; you need to have love, and so I respect my family's feelings.

Several youth pointed out the importance of grandparents in their lives, and the fact that opinions of this elder generation are especially sought. Describing her closeness with extended family, Yashvi (15, Hindu) stated, "Also, grandparent-wise, their opinion

is everything to me, just like my parents; so I would definitely want them to like the person I pick.” Similarly, Amil (15, Christian/NC) desires approval of his grandparents: “I plan on getting married; I will go for a love marriage and will get my parents’ approval because I care about what they think and I would care about what others think, too – especially my grandparents.”

Anna (18, Christian/NC) often has discussions about her future spouse with family members, particularly her grandfather, who offers advice to her:

He says you always have to check this and this and this about the person; take your time. That’s what they (extended family members) really told me; they told me they all will help. I know my Mom, once I hit 16, she will be praying about a perfect, good spouse for me. My grandfather has had so many talks with us. I heard him telling my cousins, so you just hear it down the line. I know I’m sure to have some sort of counseling with my grandfather very soon.

On the parental side, Abhinav (37, Hindu) stated that he and his wife definitely want their children to have traditional Hindu weddings, but noted that they “are not going to put any pressure on them; what kind of girl or boy, whatever you like; whoever you like to marry; who you think you can spend your life with, we are OK with that.” He elaborated further, stating that he sees parents accommodating to changes in arranged marriage. Although he and his wife very much want to be part of the marriage selection process, he also noted the shift in attitudes and cultural practices which provides more opportunities for youth to meet one another:

I think that mainly they have more options, more choices now. So much is changing now. They are all going to the same schools; they are all getting the same kind of jobs; the boys and girls are equal now, and this is true in India as well as in our culture and other societies too. So, they get more chance to talk to each other. They are going to find more people that they like, and they are going to get married that way. So yeah, things are changing a lot, and I think boys and girls have more opportunity to choose their own partner. Families are beginning to be open to this now as well, because they know that and it can’t go on like it was, especially now that both boys and girls are working. So, it is becoming hard for parents to do the arranged marriage

thing. There are too many constraints, too many criteria, so even parents are happy enough if their kids can find a suitable person, and they also like them, and go on from there.

While the majority of parent interviews revealed that they have high hopes that their children will be considerate of their thoughts and feelings and those of extended family when they make crucial decisions about marriage, Sahitha (49, Hindu) expressed dismay about her children's disregard for rules and traditions that she and her husband have attempted to enforce:

I have two daughters and one son, and they each have their own different values. They feel they should be able to do whatever; they are liberated, as they say. The kids have grown up here and they want to be free, like very liberal. I don't approve, but they don't seem to care. It makes me very worried sometimes; they can be like, well, it's my decision . . . I tell my girls, if you are going to get married, you are going to get married only once; I try to explain the traditional Indian values – like it's not a set of clothes and you are going to change! You have to learn to compromise and work things out; communication is very important. We keep trying and striving to instill the values. Some things we are not comfortable with them doing.

In this section, the survey and interview data clearly affirm that although youth highly desire choice in the mate selection process and view it as necessary, participation of parents and extended family in the decision making process is welcomed and appreciated in many cases. Although these Indian-American youth are slowly working toward transforming the tradition of arranged marriage by insisting upon their greater participation and responsibility for choice, they are not forsaking the cherished ritual of family involvement and blessing in the process. It appears that they understand and accept that when they marry an individual, compatibility and mutual acceptance of the families matter.

Following Indian Traditions of Dating and Marriage

Because they are growing up in a globalized environment, Indian-American youth are

exposed not only to the dating and marriage traditions of their heritage, but also to the dating and coupling practices of westernized cultures. They may choose to follow the customs of one or the other culture, or to create hybrid practices by mixing them in ways they choose. Rather than creating a tug of war between the two cultures, blending traditions may be the norm in the future, as was also found in works by George and George (2010); Netting (2006); Rangaswamy (2000) and Gupta (1999a). Youth in this study have demonstrated respect for their culture, and interest in maintaining traditions. The vast majority, (all but six youth participants), have traveled to India for various occasions and celebrations; these have provided them with first-hand exposures to their Indian heritage and culture, with countless valuable experiences that they appreciate and cherish. They recognize the power of their birth culture, yet because they also are American, they feel that they have choices about which traditions to follow.

When asked about following Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that are important to their parents, many of the youth (66%, $n = 116$) disagree that they feel they have little choice about following them; however 9% ($n = 16$) agree and 25% ($n = 44$) are unsure that they have little choice about following Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that are important to their parents. Additionally, more than half of youth participants (56%, $n = 99$) reported that their parents directly convey their expectations about following marriage and family traditions by talking with them openly and often. However, 27% ($n = 47$) youth disagree and 17% ($n = 30$) are unsure about whether parents directly convey their expectations about following marriage and family traditions.

Kripa (17, Hindu) indicated that she has open communication with her parents about following Indian marriage and family traditions, and she relishes the freedom she feels in

making decisions for herself:

I feel I have a lot of freedom in my choices because my parents have that trust in me that I am not going to do something that they don't want me to do. They do give me a lot of freedom, and I do follow the rules and regulations of that . . . There is an expectation that I will marry . . . but if I decided it was not for me, then my parents will agree to do what you want, and maybe think or hope that your choices will change, but there will be acceptance of that.

Tripta (18, Hindu) stated that she and her parents are in agreement regarding

requirements for following Indian marriage and family traditions:

My Mom and my Dad have both expressed their requirements openly. I don't think my requirements are any different than what they have for me. My parents are very open to whatever keeps me happy and things like that . . . I think it is not a difficult position for my parents to express what they want to tell me about marriage . . . I know what my parents want and they know what I want, and it is not any different; I think we are all on the same level and it is good.

While talking about marriages within her family, Kopal (17, Hindu) expressed that she can see the advantages of both love and arranged marriages. She feels as most of the youth do, that her parents will be supportive of her future marriage decision as long as they can agree about the suitability of her choice of partner:

My parents have an arranged marriage. Most of my family and relations have all had arranged marriages. My cousin has a love marriage; so, I guess my family has both love and arranged marriages. Personally, I would like a love marriage. I think an arranged marriage and a love marriage can both work out. I've seen love marriages work out; I've seen arranged marriages work out, and to be completely frank, I honestly think that arranged marriages are much more successful than love marriages considering the statistics and everything I've seen in relationships . . . I love my parents and I know that they know what is best for me; whoever I bring home, they will accept unless they think it is a completely wrong fit for me. I believe that the choice should be left up to me. I definitely want to have an Indian wedding; that is for sure. I want to pick an Indian man.

Following the same line of questioning, adults were asked if they put pressure on their children to follow Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that are important to parents. Many adults (62%, n = 84) disagree that this is true, while 28% (n = 38) agree

and 10% (n = 13) are unsure that they put pressure on their children to follow Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that are important to parents. The majority of parents (85%, n = 115) also agree that they directly convey to their children the expectations that they follow marriage and family traditions by talking about them openly and often, while only 6% (n = 8) disagree and 9% (n = 12) are unsure that they do so. Although conveying expectations to children may be viewed as a form of pressure, the following comments suggest that pressuring children is not what parents intend. Speaking of his 18-year-old daughter, Stan (62, Christian/NC) acknowledged the differences between cultures and the choices that are available to her:

One of the things I believe in strongly is the customs, systems, traditions and values in which I was raised. But I cannot exactly duplicate that because she is an American and even though she lives in this house, she steps out and she is in a contrasting culture. I tell her to weigh these things. The best thing about America is you have a choice. If you can meld the best here and the best there, it will be beautiful for you. There are a lot of good things and there are bad things. You have to know how to choose wisely.

After suffering through an arranged marriage that ended in divorce, Rewa (36, Christian/NC) wants to avoid communication mistakes with her son. Feeling that her own parents fell short on many levels with open and honest communication throughout her marriage process, Rewa wants a more informed and independent decision for her son when he gets older. Speaking about what she hopes to convey to her son, she noted that the choice of whom he marries should be his:

I want parents to understand the fact that marriage is not about them. I think one decision that everyone should make for themselves is whom they should marry. I know that at 22 and 23 it is very young; people don't know anything about their lives to make such a crucial decision. I didn't know anything at 22. It is quite tricky to be so young and make such a big decision in your life . . . I feel all these kids who were born and raised here have better lives, but the parents don't know really who they are. It's one thing to keep your culture alive, but you have to consider how the kids are growing up here, and talk with them all the time about the choices they have.

It appears from these responses that there is open and frequent communication between parents and youth, so that most youth are not feeling particularly pressured about the issue of choice in terms of following Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that have particular importance to their parents. It seems that they would be comfortable in exerting personal agency to make choices that are acceptable to them and their parents regarding which traditions to follow; however, more in-depth research on this topic would be required to learn about comfort levels with specific traditions, and which ones would be cause for contention between parents and children. Nevertheless, there are points of disagreement that are not well communicated, and these are examined in the next section.

Disclosure: Truth or Dare in Talking with Parents about Sensitive Topics

Through their stories and responses to survey questions, Indian-American youth indicated that often there is lack of communication between them and their parents about what is happening in their social lives. Given the ambivalence and sometimes outright rejection of the sensitive topic of dating by many Indian parents, it is understandable that youth would be reluctant to share a lot of information about their social interactions. As Rangaswamy noted, “These are such sensitive issues that most second generation Indian-Americans would rather not discuss it with their parents at all. Most Indian teenagers date, but in secret and over the objections of their parents” (2000:182). She further elaborates that “peace has been brought in the Indian immigrant household at the expense of honesty, and the youth have accepted it as the only possible way to deal with an impossible situation” (2000:182).

Adolescents' active management of information about their lives and levels of disclosure about issues deemed as personal also was addressed by Smetana and Asquith (1994). They examined the "boundaries between legitimate parental authority and adolescents' personal jurisdiction," as well as the "consequences of discrepancies between parents' and adolescents' conceptions of authority for adolescent-parent conflict" (1994:1148). They found that adolescents distinguish between parents' authority to regulate moral, prudential and conventional issues, and their own authority to regulate personal issues, which were judged to be justifiably controlled by themselves. They also found that families were more restrictive about personal issues with girls than with boys. Later work by Smetana, Metzger, Gettman and Campione Barr (2006) pointed out that there are increasing opportunities for adolescents to keep things secret, to manage information, and to make choices about disclosure, as they spend more time outside the home. Additionally, they direct attention to the need for more research to examine secrecy and disclosure among different ethnic groups, noting that these terms "may have different meanings in different cultural contexts" (2006:214). Mounts and Kim (2009) also noted that parents often may not be aware of their children's initial ventures into dating, and because adolescents view dating as a personal domain, they will minimize reporting of their activity.

Disclosure of Information to Parents

In examining how Indian-American youth communicate with their parents about sensitive information, many youth (71%, $n = 125$) reported that they carefully control the amount and nature of information they provide to their parents regarding their interactions with the opposite sex. However, only 39% ($n = 53$) of adults agree that their

children did this, indicating a rather large discrepancy in parents' knowledge of what may be occurring. Of the youth participants, 21% (n = 37) disagree that they carefully control the amount and nature of information they give to their parents about interactions with the opposite sex, and 8% (n = 14) are unsure. Some parents disagree (33%, n = 44) and others are unsure (28%, n = 38) about whether or not their child controls communication about interactions with the opposite sex.

Several youth shared that they purposely hide their social lives and activities from parents, while lamenting that they think their parents simply would not understand their needs or motivations for engaging in social behavior that is typical of western teens and young adults. Although casual dating and multiple dating relationships are commonplace in mainstream America, these generally are not acceptable in Indian culture so it is understandable that youth are uncomfortable with sharing information about their encounters and activities with the opposite sex (Shankar 2008; DasGupta and DasDasgupta 2002; Maira 2002; Rangaswamy 2000; Gupta 1999b). Nearly all the youth who were interviewed indicated that they keep some details to themselves regarding their social lives, mainly out of fear of parental reaction or judgment. The following examples are illustrative of the many similar youth comments on this topic:

Prema (18, Hindu) has not told her parents about her dating experiences:

I have never confessed that I have done anything like that. I'm not sure how they would take it. My mom probably would take it much more in a cool, calm way; but my Dad, I think he would give me advice, telling me that this is not what I am supposed to do; this is not how I raised you, this is not how an Indian girl behaves, and he would make me feel bad about it emotionally.

Salim (18, Muslim) stated that he also hides his social life from his parents:

My parents don't even really know half of the stuff that I do; they are unaware of it.

Like, just the fact of going to a party and drinking and being out until five in the morning. They would probably just dissolve. So I just don't bring it up; I can't bring it up because they won't understand. I know if I bring it up, they are going to start judging me and be like, 'That's not my son, what happened to him?!' So I just never bring it up, and I can't even talk to them about that kind of stuff; they won't understand.

Many youth also suggested that the scope of their disclosures may vary or evolve, depending on the situation. How they reveal details also may depend on anticipated parental attitude or reaction toward the nature of the disclosure. Several youth, most of them female, indicated that they begin by first sharing information with their mothers, who then in turn may try to pave the way for greater acceptance before conveying it to fathers. This is not uncommon; past research has shown that mothers tend to be more involved in their children's daily routines, and thus know more about their activities than fathers know; mothers also were more likely than fathers to gain information by active supervision or voluntary disclosure from the child (Waizenhofer, Buchanan and Jackson-Newsom 2004). These researchers also found that fathers, more than mothers, received information via spouses. Updegraff, McHale, Crouter and Kupanoff (2001) reported that mothers are more knowledgeable about adolescents' peer relationships than fathers, while Madsen (2008) noted that mothers participated more often in the rule setting process than fathers, but both parents were more likely to use rules to regulate their daughters' activities than those of their sons. Oftentimes mothers act as mediators between their husbands and children and may bend the rules for daughters without telling their husbands (Kallivayalil 2004). These points are illuminated by Tripta (18, Hindu), who summed up what many female youth shared:

Before, I think I was afraid to tell my parents if I was dating. Recently, I guess after sophomore year (in high school), I tell my parents everything, and I'm not ashamed. OK, not everything; I don't tell them everything, but the majority of my life, I really

do tell them. I introduce them to all my friends. I would tell my mom first if I had a boyfriend or anything like that; I wouldn't be ashamed of telling her; I may have been a few years ago but I don't think I am anymore. I think it would be a little awkward with my dad. I tell him some things, and my mom tells him things. And maybe a lot we don't tell, like some things that go on in high school.

Adam (19, Catholic) reported that he doesn't tell his parents everything either, further stating, "I won't do anything stupid, but things I know they wouldn't approve of, I probably wouldn't tell." And although Prabir (17, Hindu) claims that he shares everything with his parents, he also noted that there are some details which he consciously withholds:

I don't really hide my social life from my parents; they know all my friends. It is not that I am afraid to tell my parents about dating life. They have also said if you have a girlfriend, we have no problem with it; you can tell us. It is just that I feel that they don't need to know and I'd rather just keep that kind of stuff to my own discretion. With the rest of my social life I am really open with my parents. They, especially my mom, ask me all kinds of questions about my friends and I've told them everything.

Kruthika (20, Hindu) also indicated that she keeps most information to herself regarding her social interactions. "In college I have a lot more room to experiment and going with other people, talking to other people but they (her parents) really haven't asked too much about it and I'm not planning on telling them much about it either."

These illustrations of youths' non-disclosure point to some contradiction that seems to exist in communication between the generations. Although youth declare that they value their parents' input and approval regarding many aspects of their lives and they honor their parents' trust in them, nonetheless they withhold information about components of their social lives that parents likely would want to know. Youth want to experiment, but at the same time, they want to keep their parents happy, resulting in struggles with vacillating communication.

Such secrecy is not limited to only the youth in this study. While sharing the story of their love marriage, Abhinav (37, Hindu) and Vanita (36, Hindu) reflected on how they agonized at times during the four years that they kept their relationship a secret from their families and friends. Their relationship exemplifies the exception of a longer dating period prior to marriage, which is quite different than what most of the other adults in this study experienced. During their courtship, both Vanita and Abhinav struggled with maintaining privacy and withholding information from their families about what was happening in their personal lives. Having met in engineering college, Abhinav and Vanita quickly became friends, and their relationship deepened over time. Since they were not of the same caste, Abhinav did not tell his parents that he was dating Vanita, because he knew they would disapprove of the caste difference. Vanita kept the friendship secret for over three years, until she knew for sure that she would marry Abhinav. She said,

We came from conventional families but we did unconventional things . . . I did tell eventually, but I knew that it meant I had to marry him. Even if it is a love marriage, once you start dating, we don't have any choice; dating means you have to get married to that person. No choice there - that's what my concern was.

Vanita continued that she was very anxious about outward appearances, and what others would think if they knew she was dating Abhinav. Though her family was unaware of her relationship, she was concerned that other girls in the hostel where she was living at the time would be suspicious of her activities, and perhaps betray her by gossiping about the situation:

I'm going out, I'm so scared, I don't know what other girls might say, and I don't know what is going to happen if I don't marry him and everybody knows that I am dating . . . If I am going out, then he has to make sure he is going to marry me. That is what I told my parents when I told them; well, first I told my Mom.

Eventually Abhinav and Vanita told their parents and got married soon after disclosing their relationship. However their secrecy, coupled with the fact of having a love marriage with partners from different castes, created significant difficulties, particularly with Abhinav's family. His parents and several of his relatives refused to attend their wedding, and some of Vanita's family also did not attend. Communication between Abhinav and his immediate family in India was strained for several years because they felt he "was leaving them in the desert." His relatives eventually eased their stance and began to accept his marriage and young family, once children were born. However, Abhinav added that his relationships with his father and older brother still have an undercurrent of resentment due to their view that Abhinav tarnished the family reputation by not having an arranged marriage with a bride of the same caste.

Mary George (author, *Before the Wedding Bells*, 2010), pointed out some genuine concerns of parents which arise from youth disclosure about dating and sexual activity. She noted that because youth often are afraid of repercussions, parents might not know if something goes terribly wrong for their children because of the shame and guilt associated with going against parental rules and values:

So the parents would never know; nobody would know. Some could be date raped; those things happen. Some of them could have abortions; all these issues, people live with . . . Especially for Indians, virginity is held so high; and then, that is something you never even talk about, so this is something very shocking now. I think that things are changing very rapidly.

It appears that in some instances, youth would rather be silent about their relational activities, rather than risk upsetting their parents, destroying trust, or causing a major rift in the family. And although youth may withhold information from their parents so as not to hurt them, they also could put themselves in jeopardy, depending on the situation. For

Indian-American youth, the task of separating their own priorities and values from the expectations of their families can be very challenging indeed. These are dilemmas bound by the clashes of culture as well the struggle for autonomy, which continue to confront both youth and parents, and to test them in provocative ways.

Disclosure of Information to Friends

The majority of parents of youth in this study were restricted in their interactions with the opposite sex while growing up and did not have dating experiences, so it is not surprising that many of the youth found it difficult to address with their parents anything related to associations or relationship issues with the opposite sex. Like their western counterparts, many Indian-American youth turn to their peers to share information and gather advice, in order to avoid questioning or conflict with parents. Daddis (2008b) found that adolescents' friends are important sources of advice, and are valuable metrics to gauge their own construction of beliefs about personal authority over their social worlds, as well as levels of freedom and parental control. He also noted that friends influence the extent to which adolescents voluntarily disclose information to parents about romantic involvement.

In another study, Daddis and Randolph (2010) found that teens are more likely to discuss romantic and dating matters with peers rather than parents, citing that it is a private aspect of their lives and matter of personal choice to discuss it or not, rather than an issue of right or wrong over which parents would have authority. However they also point out that romantic involvement is a "multifaceted issue" which "contains concerns that fall under both parent and adolescent jurisdiction of authority" (2010:310). Although it is true that many youth turn to their peers to discuss these personal matters, Indian-

American youth also face the worry of gossip and rumors in their tight communities, if their friends decide to share information. As Shankar (2008) pointed out, Indian-American youth are very cognizant of the effects of their behavior on the family name. Therefore, “they try to be as secretive as possible about their social lives when they violate social codes,” because “maintaining a solid family reputation is crucial as teens look ahead to their own marriages and becoming active community members” (2008:180).

The majority of youth in this study agree (80%, $n = 141$) that they disclose information about their associations with the opposite sex more to their friends, and less to their parents, while some (12%, $n = 21$) disagree and others (8%, $n = 14$) are unsure. Parents leaned toward agreeing (47%, $n = 64$) that their children disclose more of this information to friends, but 27% ($n = 36$) disagree, and 26% ($n = 35$) are not sure about this.

Salim (18, Muslim) shares concerns about relationships with girls with his best friend, a Spanish male. He said,

About my relationship with girls, I talk to my best friend from high school. Girl issues and anything like that, he talks to me about it and I talk to him about it, so that is mostly where I get my advice from - pretty much from friends.

For Siddhi (19, Hindu), the experience of her not only dating, but dating outside of her race, religion and culture, has impacted her relationship with her parents significantly. For quite awhile, she didn't share her experience with anyone except a close friend, which caused her anxiety, but also provided comfort during the period of secrecy. Siddhi explained her parents' dismay and apprehension when she first told them about her budding relationship with a White, Jewish young man:

They were in shock! They were so worried. I couldn't even tell them for three months that I was dating somebody because I didn't have the heart to tell them, because I know the way they think about the whole situation of dating.

Siddhi also first disclosed to her mother, who then slowly broke the news to her father.

Siddhi explained that her mother laid groundwork about her accomplishments in school and good grades, so that these might soften the blow about her dating, and ease the angry reaction that was anticipated from her father. Nonetheless, Siddhi continued seeing her boyfriend, and stated that once her father accepted the situation, her relationship with her parents changed in a positive way:

I feel like my dating changed my parents a lot; I think before they would not have been OK with whatever I do. I feel that really changed it a lot. For my parents, after I started dating, they still wanted to be a part of my life; they knew if they didn't accept whatever, I wouldn't talk to them. I wouldn't be so close to them. Me and my parents are close and I tell them anything now. Before they were more concerned; if we don't let her and support her in what she really wants to do, then she won't talk to us and we might lose her. So dating really changed that for my parents.

In this instance, it appears as though Siddhi has almost forced her parents to accept her relationship; it is she who declares that she might separate from them if they don't comply with her wishes. Usually it is children who fear that parents might cut them off if wishes are not respected.

Sonya (19, Christian/NC) shared the story of one of her acquaintances, who dates several boys simultaneously, thereby constantly breaking parental rules under the radar, and taking a lot of risks without the knowledge of her parents. She spoke about how common this is among her peer group, stating that "every single one of my friends has dated." Sonya said that among her friends, discussions about relationships with the opposite sex are frequent, and routine disclosures among themselves are natural and accepted. At the same time, there is fear of rejection and consequences if parents were to

find out about what is happening:

She (her friend) feels her parents will not accept that and she doesn't want to be rejected by her parents; so this is her easiest way out – to lie about it. In that way, she is still going to have her parents; but they just don't know about it. They are still there, but if they find out, they might force her back to India; that is the kind of risk that she is taking. It could end really badly for her; she might have to quit school. I think it is kind of crazy. I know my other friend who is also Indian, goes clubbing every weekend. She drinks; I say, 'Do your parents know about it?' She goes, 'No!' But, there is no way I am risking my life because my parents trust me. I don't ever want them to feel left out, or that I am doing something behind their back.

Consciously withholding information from parents or lying about social activities as illustrated in this example are perceived by second-generation Indian-American youth as ways to circumvent intergenerational conflict, and perhaps the only solution to keeping parent-child relationships from collapsing over constant disagreement about how much autonomy a youth should be granted in this regard (Manohar 2008; Kallivayalil 2004; Rangaswamy 2000; Leonard 1997). As Jensen, Arnett, Feldman and Cauffman (2004) also indicated, both high school and college students feel justified in lying to parents when they feel their rights to make decisions independent of parental influence are violated. As Maira noted, "Second-generation youth learn to produce the fictions that their parents want to see and hear" as they challenge the social customs and expectations of previous generations (2002:159).

Nonetheless, parents want children to talk to them and to include them in conversations about their relationships, and about making responsible decisions. Aruna (44, Jain) acknowledged the influence of friends, while also reiterating that she and her husband are open to whatever discussions her son wishes to have:

Depending upon what kind of exposure and experience that they have in school, that actually does shape them in their thinking, and how they share. I think friends are going to be more influential than we are. We are there to give them the basic principles and discipline of life and morals. The friends are the ones who make them

choose which morals and principles they are going to take. So, we are being open to that and saying, you know what, we are there to talk about it with you.

Joita (43, Hindu) and Nirvash (42, Jain) spoke about teaching their children responsibility in sharing information, and pointed out the differences in how they approach sensitive topics with their children versus how their parents spoke with them. As Joita noted, there is “a lack of openness about dating,” and she further stated that her parents “never talked about personal things.” Her husband, Nirvash, felt that it is important to approach things differently and more responsibly with their children, so that as they grow into adolescence, they will feel comfortable in talking with them rather than to friends about dating and relationships. He said, “If you have an open relationship with them, then it is easier to have a conversation and you will know by how they express themselves, by what they say and certain things; you will pick up on those signs.” Nirvash pointed out generational differences in communication which he hopes will be different with his own children:

I wouldn't talk to my parents about fifty things versus what I would expect, hopefully, that my children would come talk to us. So it is a difference in the way we approach children versus the way I think the older generation approached children. I'm not saying all of them were like that but I think most of them were not able to deal with questions that they never asked their parents, or their parents never talked about with them. So, they just couldn't fathom doing that with their children because they didn't think it was the right thing to do. Even today, I think it is still the case in India; it is still very reserved in how they have conversations.

Although in these examples it is evident that parents are fervent in their wishes for children to talk with them, it still appears that conversation topics may be limited, depending on the levels of autonomy and types of choices that youth are granted. Concerns of creating conflict and risking parental disapproval still are barriers to open communication.

Personal Privacy and Trust with Parents

The declarations of youth regarding lack of disclosure of information, intentional misleading and occasional deceit with parents are linked to their desire for personal privacy about matters of relating with the opposite sex. The overwhelming majority of youth in the study (87%, $n = 153$) agree that they have a right to maintain personal privacy about matters of relating with the opposite sex, while 7% ($n = 12$) disagree, and 6% ($n = 11$) are unsure. More than half of the adults (61%, $n = 82$) also agree that their children have right to privacy about these matters, while 23% ($n = 31$) disagree, and 16% ($n = 22$) are unsure. However, the need for privacy coupled with the potential for withholding information or lying about activities is a serious consideration in youths' relationships with their parents.

In discussing privacy, the issue of trust between parent and child was brought up by several youth. While they agree that privacy is important, they also appear to feel that trustworthiness is equally important. Though somewhat incongruent with previous findings about disclosure, lying and hiding information, several youth indicated that maintaining a trustworthy rapport with parents is essential. Rena (16, Hindu) stated, "My parents trust me and I don't feel like I need to hide anything from them. They trust me to choose my friends wisely and to do the right thing; my parents know that I won't do something crazy."

Sisters Tripta (18, Hindu) and Yashvi (15, Hindu) were heartfelt when they spoke about the trust their parents have in them:

Tripta: My parents trust me to do right thing ... With social things, my parents know all of my friends. I know they trust me; it is a very good feeling to have that; I can do things and know that they will trust me to do the right things always.

Yashvi: My Mom wants the best for us. Our parents trust us with school and socially. They think if they reinforce the rules after you have made a mistake, that's what you need to not make that mistake again; not grounding, but talking about it.

Honesty and trustworthiness were key themes in Rashina's (17, Catholic) comments too; although maintaining some privacy is important to her, Rashina indicated that her mother wants to be the first to know when she considers dating:

For me and my Mom, it is all about honesty. My parents don't really set many rules for me because they trusted that they have raised me right. I am a good girl ... my parents are pretty free with me going out, and it is also because I am very honest with them ... I just feel like being shady with your parents is just so much harder to do than just telling them the truth. I'm that kind of person. I don't like dishonesty so I just tell them. I do tell my Mom about all my guy friends, like who I am texting. As long as I keep her in the loop and she has always told me this - if you are dating, I just want to know about it early on; I don't want to be surprised; I don't want to hear it from someone else; I just want to hear it when it happens.

Rashina (17, Catholic) also called out classmates who consistently lie to their parents: "I don't appreciate that they are just very shady like that to their parents; they do all these parties and stuff like that without telling them; that is not something I want to be part of."

During several conversations in the interviews, both parents and youth sometimes struggled to contain their emotions. Some of the topics certainly touched a nerve and produced reactions laden with expressed and unexpressed emotions. In the next section, the topics of emotionality and how Indian-American parents and youth express their feelings to one another in relation to sensitive topics are addressed.

Emotional Expression

Family discourse about intergenerational differences regarding western practices of socialization between the sexes often is fraught with emotional discomfort and tension. The stress and strain which surround the ability to freely express feelings cannot be ignored when looking at the broad picture of communication between Indian-American

parents and youth. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2003) theorized at length about emotional constraint, emotional labor³⁰ and emotional management driven by culture,³¹ recognizing that the emotions which people feel and express, or conversely, do not express, may be particularly due to cultural constraints and expectations. Hochschild also notes significant gender differences regarding emotion, stating that women are better emotional managers; they are thought to manage expression and feeling better and more often than men, “especially emotion work that affirms, enhances, and celebrates the well-being and status of others” (2003:164-165).

Cognizant of negative reactions of parents regarding forbidden social activities, it is quite possible that Indian-American youth are managing not only their own emotions in these situations, but also consciously aiming to protect those of parents. Rather than disturb parents by causing them to experience feelings of tumult, despair and rejection, Indian-American youth avoid that for their parents as well as themselves by carefully managing their disclosures and displaying a façade of compliance with rules and traditions. As Hochschild also states, “Almost everyone does the emotion work that produces what we might, broadly speaking, call deference” (2003:168). By skillfully acting in deferential ways toward parents regarding their behavioral expectations, Indian-American youth can experiment with social experiences that are deemed inappropriate for them.

³⁰ Term coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild to describe a type of emotional regulation and management which creates a visible display of facial and bodily expression that is publicly acceptable within a given context.

³¹ Hochschild wrote specifically about emotional labor as it relates to cultures of organizations and workplaces. Her work contributed much insight into how organizations (notably the airline industry), teaches employees specific feeling rules to guide customer interactions.

Stephanie Shields (2002) approaches the socio-cultural construction of emotions through the lens of gender. Through scrutiny of the prevailing stereotype in modern American society that women are emotional while men are not, Shields provides insight regarding how beliefs about emotion shape actual emotional experiences, actions and values of men and women, and in that process, how they construct gendered notions of themselves. She states, "In our lived experience, beliefs about emotion are among the more powerful guides by which we understand ourselves as women and men" (2002:63). Further, both scholars address the notion of power, noting that women are expected to defer more, and more often. Hochschild wrote, "The difference between men and women is a difference in the psychological effects of having or not having power" (2003:168-169). Shields states, "Where gender is concerned, what is at stake is the status quo of social arrangements that inequitably benefit one sex over the other" (2002:146). She adds that men can appear more powerful because of the ease with which their anger is expressed and socially accepted, whereas women may be labeled stereotypically shrew like if they expressed anger in the same way. As has been demonstrated throughout this research, consequences tend to be greater for females than males when they break the rules, speak their minds, and express their feelings about situations which they perceive to be unjust.

Protecting the family reputation and saving face are key elements in communication patterns and behavior regulation between Indian-American youth and their parents. Hochschild's (2003) research drew upon the work of Erving Goffman which centered on the notion of saving face and "impression management" when social interactions go amiss, noting that there is a distinct emotional experience of embarrassment, guilt or

shame involved in loss of face (Fields, Copp and Kleinman 2007:157). These authors note that “working to save face keeps social life moving and maintains social institutions and patterns of interaction” (2007:157). They emphasize the importance of understanding how emotions guide encounters with others and “help to establish and maintain social arrangements, whether just or unjust” (2007:157). Interview excerpts in the following sections illustrate how these concepts have manifested in the lives of some of the Indian-American youth in this study. However, it is also important to keep in mind that western concepts of emotions are neither understood nor embraced by everyone (Lutz 1988). This scholar asserts that emotions are culturally constructed, and that emotional meaning then becomes a collective product of the social life of the people who experience it. Her work illustrates that emotions and their expression differ among varieties of people, their locale and attendant cultures. This concept is important to keep in mind when interpreting comments and experiences of these study participants.

Expression of Feelings to Parents about Dating and Marriage

In light of what has already been presented about disclosure and privacy issues, it is not surprising that more than half the youth (56%, n = 99) disagree that they easily express their feelings about dating and future marriage to their parents, while 28% (n = 49) agree, and 16% (n = 28) are unsure about this. On the other hand, the great majority of parents (85%, n = 115) agree that they easily express their feelings about dating and future marriage to their children, while only 5% disagree (n = 7) and 10% (n = 13) are unsure about this. From the variety of comments already provided by many parents in this study, particularly regarding setting rules and regulating the lives of youth, indeed it seems clear that they have no problem expressing their feelings to their children

about dating and future marriage. However, as Gupta (1999b) and Leonard (1999) noted, it's quite possible that youth do not express their thoughts and feelings in this regard because discussions may lead to the topic of sex, which parents are not comfortable discussing with their children.

Interestingly, youth were nearly evenly divided regarding feeling tension about discussing intimate matters with their parents, despite more of them previously reporting that they do not easily express their feelings. When discussing thoughts and feeling with their parents regarding matters involving the opposite sex, 44% (n = 77) agree that they feel a lot of tension, while 43% (n = 76) disagree and 13% (n = 23) are unsure if they feel tension. On the other hand, parents seem more sure of themselves when discussing their thoughts and feelings with their children about matters involving the opposite sex; 70% (n = 95) of adults disagree that they feel a lot of tension in this regard, while 10% (n = 13) agree and 20% (n = 27) are unsure if they feel such tension. Yet, there is a striking absence of conversation between parents and children about matters involving sexual expression, which is addressed below.

To illustrate the level of tension and distress that some young Indians feel regarding talking about dating and marriage with their parents, Prema (18, Hindu) described the prevalence of elopement. She explained that when her mother was younger, most young couples who wanted a love marriage ran away and eloped rather than attempt to cope with the tension of their parents' immediate disapproval. She states that this practice of elopement instilled enough fear in parents to force them to be more open regarding marriage prospects for their children:

During my Mom's age, when people fell in love, they eloped. Parents said, 'No, you can't do this! You cannot marry somebody who we don't tell you to!' But then what

happened is that as more people started eloping, parents got scared, and so now they are becoming more open. This way, they give the child a comfort zone so that the child can come and tell their parents, 'Mom, I like this person.' So she tells them, instead of just eloping without telling parents out of fear. Now parents fear children eloping much more than children fear their parents! So, it is like things have turned now, that the parents are more fearful rather than the kids being fearful. So now the parents are telling the kids, even my Mom told me this, 'If you like somebody, just tell us and we will see if this person is a good match for you. If he fits for you, then we will say yes, yes!' I think this is a good balance, this way everybody agrees; everybody is happy. I think it has loosened things up for dating. Still, it is more like children tend not to go straight out to tell their parents, 'Oh, I am dating this person.' They tend to keep it a secret. For example, I feel like, what if I like someone and what if they turn out to be bad? I don't want to be telling them every single thing like, 'Oh, I like this person' one day and then, 'Oh, the other day, we broke up!' I think, just go with the flow and then the one that is really serious and I am really sure this is the one I want to marry, then I would tell them.

In some cases the level of discomfort is so high that couples will keep marriages secret from their families for long periods of time. Leonard (1999) has written about several Indian-American couples who have gone through significant problems due to non-communication of their romantic attachments. She attributes this to the couple feeling intensely driven by what they wanted, and having the gumption to exert their autonomy to pursue marriage without the knowledge or blessing of parents. Nevertheless, the eventuality of having to disclose catches up, thus creating tremendous upheaval and arguments about respecting parents, and putting personal fulfillment ahead of considering parental expectations and family reputation.

While explaining all the tension she felt as a result of concealing her dating life, Siddhi (19, Hindu) was quite emotional, occasionally fighting back tears as she told the story:

When I first started dating, that is when I feel that things were really tense between me and my parents. I didn't talk to them for months because all my life I kept this balance between living as an American, and then coming home and not forgetting that I am American, but having to act more like I have to follow some traditions that my parents have lived through, and things my grandparents are always teaching me. It was really

tense at times; my Mom and Dad did not understand why I was dating. They just didn't get it; it was a constant struggle between us. It was a big problem for us because they never dated. My Mom and Dad were always asking, 'Why do you need to do that?' and I can't explain it to them. They couldn't understand.

Because his family strongly adheres to cultural and religious tenets, Salim (18, Muslim) expressed that he also feels a lot of tension in talking with his parents about dating and marriage. In comparison to many of the other youths' comments, Salim's feelings seem to be more extreme. However, a recurring theme in our conversation was his feeling of constraint in communication and pressure to conform to familial expectations:

It is amazing we have no say in major life choices like marriage, our future occupation – there are no choices. You don't have enough freedom; you can't define what to do with your life. There are boundaries and you have to stay within your culture and your religion and your ethnicity; there are so many boundaries that you can't cross. To me, the struggle is basically Indians coming out and telling their parents, NO! It is my life and so I want to do this in my life, and you can't force me to conform to something I don't want to do. If you meet a girl you really like and you want to get married to her, of course your parents are going to refuse it, but you have to stand up for yourself and get married with her and live your life . . . Our parents basically control every aspect of our lives and we have to eventually break free and do what our hearts tell us to do. We have to, because if we don't change, it will go on for years to come. We have no choice; we really don't. We have to change that; that is just the biggest thing.

Although Salim was passionate in voicing his frustration, he was unable to articulate exactly how to activate the changes he desires. Apart from risk-taking, careful negotiation and sometimes pleading, he was unsure that he or others in the same situation would have the power to change the culture that guides his life. Salim noted that compliance with both Indian cultural expectations and the Muslim religion are strong guidelines in his life, and these continue to be important in how his family conducts their lives.

Expression of Feelings to Friends about Dating and Marriage

Similar to feeling more comfortable about disclosing relationship information to peers, the majority of youth in this study (80%, $n = 141$) also agree that they express their feelings about dating and future marriage more easily to peers, while 12% ($n = 21$) disagree and 8% ($n = 14$) are unsure. On the other hand, the majority of adults (70%, $n = 95$) disagree that they express feelings about their children's dating and future marriage more easily to their peers, while 18% ($n = 24$) agree and 12% ($n = 16$) are unsure. Parents tend to talk about these issues between themselves or with immediate family, rather than with peers.

Kopal (17, Hindu) perceives that her non-Indian-American female counterparts enjoy more openness and receptivity with their parents about sensitive relational topics including dating and future marriage:

I don't know if it is just an Indian thing, but I feel like American girls especially can be so much more open with their parents, while I feel I am restricted, and I can't talk about anything else but school. It is like going to try to talk about boys or something like that to my Mom and she will say, 'Well you don't need to do that; you just need to focus on your studies,' or say, don't do this; don't do that. Sometimes I feel like there is not openness in our relationship as American daughters and their parents have. We have been talking about everything that has been going on, but sometimes I feel like I don't have as much as the other girls have . . . About my relationship with my parents, I would love to be more open with them. Yeah, I feel very, very congested at some points.

Kopal further elaborated that similar to other parents in the study, her parents also had an arranged marriage. They never dated anyone, and therefore they do not understand the need for meeting multiple people nor do they accept the concept of dating.

Consequently, Kopal turns to her friends for advice and comfort regarding issues with boys:

I talk with my friends; if I can't talk about it with my parents, then I have to talk about it with someone rather than be so bottled up. In the end, I've learned to talk about some things with them. You have to figure out the right approach to really get to them, but it's hard.

While discussing her future marriage with her parents, Rena (16, Hindu) indicated that they make their wishes known rather subtly, sometimes using humor to cover true feelings, but assuring her that they will not place undue restrictions upon her:

My parents, we talk about marriage sometimes, but I know they are not going to restrict by saying you have to marry this person or you have to marry another Indian; the only thing they say is make sure you are happy 'cause then we will be happy. Of course, my Mom kids around sometimes; she is like, really, you better marry an Indian. She is kidding obviously, and I know that. It's not like she doesn't express her feelings about that, but it is not awkward or anything. I talk about it; I talk about it with my grandma too; she says that to me too -- Rena, you better marry an Indian and I am like, OK! I know she is kidding; I'm sure she will be happy with whatever I choose. There is no tension or anything.

From the parental viewpoint, Aruna (44, Jain) spoke about the open communication she and her husband have with their son:

We have very open conversations with him. We hope it continues. Once he starts dating, the kind of girls he brings home would slowly tell us what kind of people he is choosing. Being parents and knowing what his personality is, maybe we will have different opinions after a while, or we would say I would like to give my opinion about the person who you say you are marrying; but of course, the decision is yours. But still knowing you, think about these things, and talk to us. In my heart I think I know he is going to pick his own bride and bring her home, and I will be fine with it. I believe in traditions, but I am not forcing them on him. I will be happy for him to get somebody who makes him happy.

Can We Talk? Maybe Not...and Especially Not about Sex

Although both parents and youth were asked about issues of disclosure and sharing feelings, I wanted to probe further into the issues of hiding true thoughts and feelings about dating and marriage, primarily because these topics are strongly linked to the verboten topic of sex. Nearly half of youth in this study (47%, $n = 83$) agree that they do hide their true thoughts and feelings about dating and marriage from their parents, while

38% (n = 67) disagree and 15% (n = 26) are unsure. On the other hand, the majority of parents (83%, n = 112) disagree that they hide their true thoughts and feelings about dating and marriage from their children. Only 8% (n = 11) disagree and 9% (n = 12) are unsure about this.

However, in terms of exerting emotional labor to conceal feelings from parents, nearly half of youth (49%, n = 86) disagree that it takes a lot of work to hide their true feelings from their parents, while 33% (n = 58) agree and 18% (n = 32) are unsure. This is somewhat surprising in comparison to some of the other responses to questions about disclosure. One speculative explanation could be that while coping with all of the known social constraints that differentiate Indian-American youth from their western counterparts, the cover up of feelings is just as easy as the concealing of actual activities. Unsurprisingly however, parents do not seem to hide their true feelings from their children. The majority of parents (70%, n = 94) disagree that it takes a lot of work to hide their true feelings from their children, while 19% (n = 26) agree, and 11% (n = 15) are unsure about this.

The management of desire, of sexuality, and eventual marriage choices are areas of crucial negotiation for second generation Indian-Americans, and according to Leonard, “perhaps the most significant of the areas in which they resist and reformulate the identities imposed by their elders” (1999:117). Gupta states that in addition to their reluctance to allow their children to date and often even to discuss the subject, Indian-American “parents seem even more disinclined to consider that their children may be sexually active and therefore, this subject is avoided” (1999b:133). This “gag rule”³² also

³² “Gag rule” is a term suggested by Gupta (1999b) to describe the lack of discussion of sex among Indian-American parents and youth.

is suggested by Kallivayalil (2004) and Leonard (1999); these scholars also consider the difficulties and inhibitions of discussing sexual matters, adding that the subject may be avoided in order to promote desirable behavior and to motivate daughters in particular to conform to what they deem as respectable behavior. Nonetheless, the lack of discourse about sex “does not translate into sexual abstinence in the second generation” as Gupta (1999b) stated, and as journalist Anita Jain (2008) explained in colorful detail in her memoir, *Marrying Anita*. Unlike Jain though, many Indian-American women are reluctant to discuss details of their intimate lives as they are fearful of gossip and negative stereotypes associated with female sexuality which might threaten their reputations and marriage prospects, and also damage the family’s standing in the community (Manohar 2008; DasGupta and DasDasGupta 2002; Gupta 1999b).

In this study, many youth indicated that parents communicate to them about sex by laying down one strict rule: No sex before marriage. As the above scholars have documented, there is little open dialogue about sex, and this practice continues today. Several of the young women in particular in this study discussed the fact that there is little direct communication about sex, and general avoidance of the subject. It appears that they learn about sex through a variety of means including health education classes at school, discussions with their peers, observations of what is presented in media, and in some instances, through youth groups associated with their churches or temples.

Siddhi (19, Hindu) has a maternal aunt who “got into a lot of trouble” when she was younger; she became pregnant while in medical school and had to drop out. As a result, she was labeled as the disgrace of the family, and it was “the biggest catastrophe that broke up a lot of family members.” Siddhi feels that her aunt’s blemished history highly

affects her mother's views and her ability to communicate with Siddhi on important matters of sexual conduct and intimacy:

Siddhi: About having a really intimate relationship with someone, she doesn't really want to know. She is always telling me to think with your head, not your heart. That is definitely something she has a strong opinion about.

Dianne: How openly do your parents talk with you about sex or sexual activity?

Siddhi: They don't. That is something that is understood.

Dianne: How is it understood?

Siddhi: Because whatever happened to my aunt, that happened and I understand. You don't do that.

Dianne: So, how would they be if they discovered you were engaging in any kind of premarital sexual activity?

Siddhi: I think she (Mom) would fall apart; drop dead. I really think she would. She has her opinion on it but has never voiced it. She might have asked me once but the nerve she had to have, she was shaking when she asked me. I think this all goes back to family history. It is not even culture. What happened in the family - that is always influencing things.

For Sajani (15, Jain), communication with her parents about marriage is limited at this time, very likely due to her age since she still is young; however, she is quite aware of their expectation that she will have an arranged marriage and further indicated that there is no discussion with her parents about sex:

Sajani: They don't really talk about it now. They know that I know I have to do an arranged marriage; that is the tradition and culture for so many years and they don't really talk about it, so, when the times comes, we will be talking more.

Dianne: Do you talk about sexuality or sexual expression? Does that ever come up?

Sajani: No. Never have that!

Dianne: Why is that?

Sajani: It's not something we can talk about; unless I am dating someone and then that would be a big hurt anyway. It is impossible.

Dianne: Who do you talk about it with?

Sajani: We had a talk in school but that's about it.

Dianne: So in terms of actual sex education, how do you get that?

Sajani: We have health classes and we learn about stuff like that.

Dianne: But your parents don't talk to you about it at all?

Sajani: No.

Ketav (20, Hindu) described how Indian youth keep social and sexual activity hidden from their parents:

In terms of my freedom when it comes to sexual expression and all that, it is basically that you are going to stay a virgin until you get married, that is the idea, That tends to be the case, but that doesn't stop the kids from doing it anyway. Not just here, but in India too. It has been happening more frequently. I hear stories from my friends and their girlfriends, so I have a good idea. There is a lot to be hidden from parents in general.

As Manohar found, it appears paradoxical that in some instances, adults are quite aware of their children's diversionary tactics and concealment regarding dating and sexual conduct, and they "surprisingly choose to maintain the illusion themselves" (583). She notes that this "preference for feigned ignorance over open discussion" is rooted in the consistent absence of Indian family discourse about the subjects of sex and intimate partnering (2008:583). However, there are some supports in place primarily through church or temple based education or counseling, to assist Indian-American youth with coping with the complexities of dating and sexual activity.

Sam and Mary George (authors, *Before the Wedding Bells*), and Sam as head of Parivar International³³ work with Indian-American youth in their community and around the country to provide premarital counseling and marriage preparation. In these excerpts

³³ See www.parivarinternational.org

from our conversation, they discussed the prevalence of premarital sex among Indian-American youth and they also offered their viewpoints on the difficulty of disclosure, from the perspective of their Christian ministry:

Sam: It is not that Indian kids are all chaste and staying away from it. It is widespread, maybe in the last ten years, higher prevalence because in American culture it is OK.

Mary: It is in colleges; it is probably more among boys than girls . . . I think for people who think it is OK to be part of the culture, then those are the kids who think there is no problem having premarital sex . . . But even in India, you think about Indian young people, probably they are much more liberal in the cities in India. Things have changed in the last five to ten years.

Sam: In urban India, values have changed significantly, especially for young adults who are working in technology with high paying jobs. They are 20-21; probably making more in a month than what their Dad made in a year. So these company men and women are working together, living together, sleeping together; cohabit is really high. Rents are too high and they just share apartments together, and they are sleeping together and things like that. All that, in the last ten years, has been a major cultural shift. All that is a more recent phenomenon, I would say in the last ten or fifteen years, that economic liberalization and prosperity in India has undermined sexual values and morality in India.

Mary: Things have changed so rapidly; that is why we are counseling the whole family in our ministry . . . So even the parents don't know; nobody knows sometimes, what is really happening.

Sam: Ten years ago when we did premarital counseling, when young people were coming into marriage, there were less occurrences of it. But these days it is really normal for them to have several relations, breakdowns, sexual involvements in the past, so one of the things we do talk about is coming clean with your sexual past and your emotional and relational history . . . In our ministry with young people with sexual history, we encourage them to come clean with it; but, also we believe in healing and restoration; no matter what you have done; foolish choices you have made in the past, there is always hope and recovery . . . The other thing that I found out that these days, the younger generation are more open to the idea that my future mate may not bring virginity into the marriage . . . We've seen young people come and tell those stories. I made some mistakes; she also made a mistake and that is OK; but, we want to commit ourselves to each other and to be faithful to each other. At least Christian young men and women have come to that point. We work with them to create an environment of grace where the other can forgive you, and you create mutuality and accountability and sexual exclusiveness in this relationship.

As Indian-American youth become more entrenched in western culture and western ways of coupling, and if their sexual attitudes evolve to become more independent from traditional Indian cultural and sexual behavioral norms, these youth eventually will create discourses of their own as they shape their perspectives on the values that have been passed down to them by generations of elders.

Feelings and Tensions about Following Indian Marriage Traditions

In a final point of examination regarding expressions of emotions between youth and parents, participants were questioned about their feelings regarding following Indian marriage traditions. The question refers to following typical traditions of marrying within expected parameters of race, culture and religion. More than half of youth (60%, $n = 106$) agree that their parents understand and accept their feelings about following Indian traditions regarding marriage, while 11% ($n = 19$) disagree and 29% ($n = 51$) are unsure. The majority of adults (68%, $n = 92$) also agree that their children understand and accept their feelings about following Indian traditions regarding marriage. A small number of parents disagree (8%, $n = 11$) with this, while 24% ($n = 32$) are unsure.

Furthermore, the majority of youth disagree (65%, $n = 115$) that they feel a lot of tension about discussing their thoughts and feelings with their parents regarding following Indian marriage traditions, while 24% agree ($n = 42$) and 11% ($n = 19$) are unsure. The majority of adults (81%, $n = 109$) also disagree that they feel a lot of tension about discussing their thoughts and feelings with their children regarding following Indian marriage traditions, while only 7% ($n = 10$) agree, and 12% ($n = 16$) are unsure about this.

A notable exception to the above findings is illustrated in the story of a father-daughter dilemma between Dave and Sonya, which touches upon many points of contention about following Indian marriage traditions. Since initial interviews were conducted for this study, I had occasion to talk again with Dave (42, Christian/NC) while visiting mutual Indian friends in Chicago. Dave shared that he and his daughter, Sonya (19, Christian/NC), are experiencing an escalating father-daughter conflict over her blossoming relationship with an Italian boy whom she had been seeing for several months. Now Sonya would like her father to take some time to get to know her boyfriend, but Dave refuses, stating that he is “not feeling ready to talk with him,” since the only conversation he would want to have is about the boy’s intentions toward his daughter. He indicated that he feels very limited in what he as a father can do for two reasons: First, because this boy is not Indian, and Sonya made the choice without his input, “so she has to face the consequences of that, whatever they may be.” Secondly, Dave stated that Sonya has chosen to enter a dating relationship with someone without his approval, and he “hopes and expects that she remains pure.” As Dave expressed this, it was evident that he was experiencing a significant level of discomfort in approaching the subject of sex with his daughter. Dave flatly stated that because he was not consulted in this “choice,” he will not bear any responsibility for the outcome of the relationship. “That is her issue now,” he said.

Previously Sonya had reported that she wants to be very independent in her choices and that she desires to make her own decisions. She also indicated her awareness that she may hurt her parents’ feelings because of being strong willed in her position on matters of dating and marriage. Now Sonya is faced with how to cope with the repercussions of

her position, and how to try to reconcile her wishes with those of her father, whom she loves dearly.

While Sonya continues to implore her father to be more accepting of her relationship and to communicate with her boyfriend, Dave says that there really isn't anything to talk about other than addressing his fatherly duties of planning a wedding. However, he also stated his sincere concern that both Sonya and her boyfriend have many years of college and post-graduate work ahead of them, and he questions the wisdom of attempting to sustain a courtship over the course of the next five or six years. "There is no point in that," he said bluntly; "they simply should get married now." The growing tension between dad and daughter was palpable in his comments. Sonya and her boyfriend are not yet ready to commit to marriage, and Dave feels at this point that it would be better for his pastor "to try to talk some sense into" Sonya, since she seems adamant about continuing the relationship on her terms.

Recalling some of Sonya's comments during our initial interview, which took place approximately 15 months prior to this second conversation with her father, she was clear about her desire to be autonomous. She conveyed her hope that the choices she makes would not upset her parents so much that they would withdraw their love:

I am a very independent person and . . . personally, I love my parents and I am pretty sure they love me; they have kind of made it clear that there is nothing I can do that would make them hate me; well, they might get mad and upset, but I don't think they would ever hate me.

Sonya also discussed her parents' fear if she began dating too early:

My parents would be terrified if I told them I want to date right now; they maybe even might have a heart attack. They think if I start dating I am going to get serious about someone. They want me to focus on my future and things like that. I can see that. Also, partly because they are very concerned and want me to marry an Indian, and so obviously it would be totally against the Indian culture.

And as noted in the chapter on marriage, Sonya indicated that her parents' preference is for her to marry an Indian man. She stated that they would "be very upset" if she did otherwise, and that she would "be in a lot of trouble" if she entertained the idea of marrying outside of her race and culture. At the time of my second conversation with Dave, it was quite evident that he was very upset, that Sonya was in trouble with him, and that an amiable solution was not yet reached.

Dave's disapproval and concern about Sonya's relationship reveals conflicts regarding several levels of social and cultural issues. He is upset because the boy his daughter is seeing is not Indian, and he is concerned about a possible mixed marriage. Secondly he was not consulted, nor did he have any role in choosing this male companion for his daughter. Attendant to this is the apprehension about how a potential mixed, non-arranged marriage will be viewed in his community. Third, he feels that Sonya is far too young to be in a serious relationship. Finally, he is opposed not only to her dating, but certainly to dating for a prolonged period of time. Underlying that, he is fearful of his daughter engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage. All of these things throw Dave into both anger and panic, so he distances himself from both his daughter and the situation. He also absolves himself of any responsibility for the relationship, even though Sonya is pining for his approval. In this situation, family harmony is at stake because father and daughter are at odds on how to reconcile their very different beliefs, and how to assimilate them into a workable solution that is congruent with the Indian traditions and values that are so important to Dave.

As explained earlier, a central component of arranged marriage is choice, and youth in this study are clear in their desire to be full participants in the selection of their future

spouses. They also desire parental approval, whether or not the parent participates in the process. Certainly, there are many degrees or types of parental involvement. But if parents are involved in choosing a mate for their child, then they are more likely to take on responsibility for the success of the union, and to provide support (Netting 2006; Khandelwal 2002; Rangaswamy 2000). If parents have little or no role in making the match, then ultimately the couple is on their own (Netting 2006; Rangaswamy 2000).

Some parents seem to be resigned to modifications in cultural processes regarding the future marriages of their children, which likely will integrate a much higher level of youth autonomy. They greet these changes with a variety of responses, ranging from a welcoming attitude to a mournful longing for the past and lamentation about how things have shifted. The challenge for parents is how to assimilate inevitable changes in the marriage process for their children in ways that maintain family harmony, and yet still are somewhat congruent with their beliefs, values and dreams. Youth on the other hand, are slowly transforming the arranged marriage process into a modern model, through their attempts to negotiate with parents and alter expectations, to exert their agency, and to redefine both the discourse and the traditions that they eventually will pass on to the next generation. However, in the case of Dave and Sonya, it appears that at the moment he is uncompromising and unyielding to his daughter in her pleas to reconsider his position. It seems that at this point in time, they will continue to grapple with their impasse, and Sonya will have to find ways to adjust her expectations or make a difficult decision to disregard her father's position and proceed as she wishes.

Emerging Themes and Questions for the Future

One of the dominant paradigms of parenting for the Indian-American adults in this

study is centered upon helping their children to be successful in both professional and personal domains. They want their children to achieve in academics, train for professional careers, and then marry a partner who meets with their approval in order to create a family. Through retrospections of their own experiences of spouse selection and marriage decisions, parents project forward some of the cultural scripts that have been ingrained in them and it naturally is difficult to deviate from the familiar. Yet these scripts that accompany traditions are being reconstructed by their children in ways that reflect a variety of western cultural influences and worldwide technological transformations. Indian-American youth possess a cultural uniqueness in their hybrid identity, and they don't view American culture or values as completely distinct from themselves.

Through the varied responses in both survey questions and interviews, it is evident that similar to their western counterparts, Indian-American youth control disclosure of information about some of their social activities and that they do not always share their feelings about sensitive topics with parents. However, the extent to which these behaviors influence their attitudes towards arranged marriage, or the value of parental guidance on marriage decisions is not clear. More thorough study and analysis of communication and behavior patterns might provide additional insights to determine what effect these may have on developing attitudes. In contrast, youth desire their parents' guidance, approval and blessing of their eventual marriage decisions, which requires the sharing of sometimes sensitive personal information, yet there is fear in triggering a negative parental response. This is common in adolescence and not a unique cultural dilemma. However, Indian-American youth have the added layer of

negotiating their choices through the filters of two cultures, which may further complicate their communications with adults.

A large and looming question noted in this study is how Indian-American youth will find ways to incorporate their perceptions of autonomous individuality with the collective sentiments and expectations of adhering to cultural traditions of dating and marriage. In matters of choice and autonomy, how will Indian-American parents view the need to protect childhood? Is it the same or different in any way from their western counterparts? When examining concepts of obedience to rules, duty to parents and reciprocal disclosure in communications, it may be inevitable that understandings, behaviors, and expressions of feelings will evolve to meet changing expectations. The degree to which elements of western culture will seep into conversations among Indian-American youth regarding choice, autonomy and romantic relationships also will play a significant role in creating cultural shifts that affect marriage practices.

Another consideration is the glaring absence of discourse about sex, which seems paradoxical in that Indian-Americans are living in a culture that often seems saturated with sex, yet the subject is shunned in conversation and silence about the topic between parent and child is the norm. How will this change? Is it destined to change in the second generation, particularly in light of the ubiquity of its presence in American culture, and in the increasing acceptance of singlehood, cohabitation and homosexual unions? And as young adults stretch their single life before marriage for longer periods than their parents ever did, how will issues of premarital sex and virginity be articulated? Will the “don’t ask, don’t tell” mentality continue?

In a broader view, could all of these potential developments begin to break patterns of

patriarchy that have dominated Indian culture and shaped the traditions and values that have been the foundation of Indian marriages? It will be interesting to observe just how far Indian-American youth will go in shaping notions of equality and autonomy, especially as they relate to female power, egalitarian relationships, and equity in both discourse and practice of dating and marriage. Perhaps in this second-generation, Indian and American values will not appear as dichotomous as they have been for previous generations.

While this chapter has addressed questions of choice and communication regarding marriage decisions, the next chapter focuses upon alternatives to marriage which are prominent in western culture, but considered as taboos in Indian culture, and therefore are omitted from the discourse on lifestyle choices for Indian-American youth. These lifestyles include living singly as a result of divorce or other circumstance, cohabitation without marriage, and same-sex marriage. Discussion of each of these lifestyles produces varying emotional responses and differences of opinion that are examined in the following pages.

Chapter Six: Taboos and Stigmas: Daring to Traverse New Directions on the Rocky Road of Relationships

Indian-American youth have been raised in a western culture in which marriage has become less dominant in the lives of parents and children, and once frowned upon relationship arrangements are acceptable (Cherlin 2005). Premarital sex, cohabitation without marriage, multiple marriages and divorces, births before marriage or without marriage at all, extended or permanent single life and same-sex relationships are all part and parcel of everyday life in America (DePaulo 2006; Cherlin 2010; Klinenberg 2012). The harsh stigma that once was attached to these relationship configurations has lessened significantly, and some may argue that it has disappeared completely. This transformative attitudinal shift has led to questioning the functions and necessities of marriage in modern societies, and to what scholars have termed the deinstitutionalization of marriage (Browning 2003; Cherlin 2004; Coontz 2005; Blankenhorn 2007). The paramount importance of marriage as an essential element of the American family system has diminished, and it is more optional in the United States than it has ever been, even though it remains valued (Cherlin 2005).

Yet in Indian family life, marriage is still very highly valued as an institution, and certainly necessary for bearing and raising children (Gupta 1999b; Ghewalla 2004; George and George 2010; Singh 2010). The paradigms of interdependency and family honor are strong deterrents to divorce (Kim and Wong 2002). Priority is given to the maintenance of a stable family life, and it is considered unacceptable to put children at risk of growing up without both parents (Amato 1994).

Adherence to religious beliefs and practices also influence the endurance of marriage and rejection of alternative lifestyles in Indian culture. Hinduism places a very high

premium on the family and the importance and value of children as a product of marriage. One of Hinduism's core beliefs is that by forming and maintaining a family, men and women fulfill important religious duties that are necessary for salvation (Smith 2001). Christians also embrace and require marriage as foundational to family life and consider it the necessary institution in which to raise children (George 2010).

Children in Indian culture are taught to value marriage and family life from a very early age (DasGupta 1998). Marriage as the means to create family structure is modeled to them on a daily basis, and there is little exposure to deviations from this standard. Information regarding relationships that is transmitted via parents, family, friends, organized religion, schools or mass media help to shape their thoughts and to mold their cultural beliefs about marriage. With the influence of those various segments of information upon Indian-American youths' perceptions and constructions of marriage, provocative and controversial questions may be raised about culturally prohibited subjects of divorce, cohabitation and same-sex marriage, as well as the necessity of marriage as the institutional social structure in which to raise children. The cultural scripts that Indian-American youth have grown up with forbid or disapprove of most of these practices, and Indian-American parents look upon them with disdain or chagrin. Each of these taboos presents challenges to traditional beliefs and customs about marriage that have been held dear to Indian families for centuries.

As noted in discussions about topics of marriage and choice, Indian-American youth are encouraged to think beyond individualist notions of satisfaction, and to consider others when making relationship decisions. The constructs of the 'good family' and 'good girl' have been mentioned in some conversations, and all of the alternatives to

marriage that are discussed in this chapter certainly would present a challenge to the moral discourse regarding what it means to be ‘good.’ How will Indian-American youth cope with these issues? How will they make decisions regarding acceptance or rejection of alternative lifestyles? What are they thinking about these hot button issues that are part of their bicultural world? In this chapter, the views of youth and parents regarding these relationship concepts and lifestyle issues are examined.

Divorce

Divorce and family breakup in the United States are practically taken for granted in the twenty-first century. Public tolerance for “acceptance of divorce as an alternative to marital unhappiness has certainly increased” (Orthner 1990:104), so much so that the social stigma once attached to divorce has all but disappeared in American culture. In fact, as marriage scholar Andrew Cherlin points out, the United States is unique among nations in its strong support for marriage on one hand, and its “postmodern penchant for self-expression and personal growth” on the other (2009:4). Cherlin claims that the most distinctive characteristic of American family life is “sheer movement (2009:5).” He reports that Americans step on and off the carousel of intimate partnerships (meaning marriages and cohabitating relationships) more often than people in any other western country. As a result of shorter relationships, frequent relationship transitions and the rate of marriage dissolution, Cherlin (2009) asserts that family life often is in flux and quite unstable for children, thus requiring that they make numerous adjustments, which affect their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

In the United States, divorce is the accepted outcome for couples whose marriages are irreparably broken. Among western countries, America has led in both marriage and

divorce rates since 1980, although both marriage and divorce rates have steadily declined between 1980 and 2008. America also leads in numbers of single-parent households, though numbers increased from 19.5% of all households with children in 1980 to 29.5% of households in 2008.³⁴ Trending now in the United States is an increase in divorces among long-standing couples married for 25 years or more (Brown and Lin 2012). This was nearly unthinkable in previous decades, but it has become a perplexing reality in American culture. In the twenty-first century, neither women nor men feel the compulsion to be bound by duty or obligation to remain in marriages that have become intolerable to them.³⁵ Because people are living longer lives with healthier lifestyles, and have longer careers as well as other numerous and diverse options in their lives for self-fulfillment, older couples are splitting up at unprecedented rates, often leaving their adult children feeling incredulous and betrayed.³⁶

The reasons for divorce among post-midlifers are many, including postponing marital dissolution until children are independent, and not wishing to stay in an empty nest together, especially if they have grown irrevocably apart. Protracted mid-life crises including illness, financial instability resulting from job loss or illness, or plain boredom with a spouse are some of the factors leading to divorce among this age group (Brown and Lin 2012). As in most divorce situations, women who divorce later in life are at a financial disadvantage similar to that of their younger divorced counterparts. However,

³⁴ US Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2011.

³⁵ See <http://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-05-2012/life-after-divorce.html>. Retrieved July 14, 2012.

³⁶ See <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/love-sex/info-06-2010/naked-truth-long-term-marriages-end.html/>. Retrieved July 14, 2012.

that does not seem to stop them in the quest for release from an unfulfilling marriage.

These behaviors and attitudes are incongruous with conventional Indian culture. Traditional marriage with one partner that lasts a lifetime is the norm and expectation, and remains at the heart of Indian family life. The stability of family that marriage provides not only for children, but also for the social fabric of the nation, is unquestioned among Indians, and is deemed essential for well-being. Indian scholar Prati Gheewalla (2004) notes that for Indians, the emphases on interdependency and family honor are strong deterrents to family breakup and non-traditional partnerships. Indian couples are acutely aware of their place in both their nuclear and extended family units, and they have the support and buffer of their relatives to help them work out both minor and major disagreements. Divorce as a means to escape or resolve long-standing conflicts has not been given much credence in Indian society in general, though that is slowly beginning to change (Gupta 1999b; Ravindra 2013). In the past, the only acceptable reasons for divorce have been spousal abuse or domestic violence, and yet even with these disturbing situations, women have been reluctant to divorce because of the shame and stigma attached to marital dissolution (Gupta 1999b; Singh 2010; Ravindra 2013). However, the modern rise in Indian divorce rates has “come at the time when Indians were embracing romantic love” according to Giridharadas (2011:186). He notes that years ago in arranged marriages, emotional sustenance was derived from a dozen or more people through the extended family. Now in the “new marriage,” everything is “wagered on the feelings” between the couple only, often without the supports of parental approval and regular family contact (Giridharadas 2011:195). Romantic feelings often are viewed as too fragile a foundation on which to build a marriage and when divorce occurs as a result

of the breakdown of romantic and emotional bonds between the couple, the partners are left to manage the fallout, with the woman usually having a much harder time to rebuild her life (Gupta 1999c).

Sparse statistics exist regarding divorce in India and also among Indian-Americans. Typically, the rate of divorce in India has been reported to be between 2% and 5%, although it may be as high as 10% in growing metropolitan areas, mainly due to the rise of the thriving urban middle class.³⁷ Because of the stigma attached to divorce, reporting may be inaccurate; many couples may live apart and not ever formalize a divorce in India (Amato 1994). Among Indian-Americans the rate of divorce hovers at 3%.³⁸ In sources compiled for this study, there are references to the rate of divorce increasing among Indians and Indian-Americans, although exact current numbers are not provided (Gupta 1999c; Giridharadas 2011; Ravindra 2013). Gupta (1999c) states that the number of divorced Indian-American women is slightly higher than men. Amato (1994) notes that there is a limited number of empirical studies on divorce in India because of the low divorce rates and the lack of adequate data. Though his observation is more than 20 years old, it appears that still tends to be accurate.

Avoidance and Rejection of Divorce among Indian-Americans

When asked if divorce is the best option for couples who cannot reconcile their differences, both the adults (mean = 2.56) and youth (mean = 2.70) in this study lean toward disagreement ($t = 1.11$; $df = 277.86$; $p \geq .05$). Furthermore, there is no significant difference of opinion between adults and youth about avoiding divorce if there are children in the family. The means for adults (mean = 3.57) and youth (mean = 3.70) lean

³⁷ See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12094360>. Retrieved December 30, 2016.

³⁸ See <http://www.littleindia.com/life/22152-rebuilding-after-divorce.html>. Retrieved December 30, 2016.

slightly toward agreeing to avoid divorce if there are children in the family ($t = -0.98$; $df = 278.70$; $p \geq .05$). These results indicate support for the prevailing belief in Indian culture that honoring marriage vows and maintaining commitment to a spouse is very important, and the expectation to resolve marital conflicts without resorting to divorce is intact. Additionally, the need and desire to protect children may be implied in these results. Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000) have documented long-term negative effects of divorce on children, and some of the youth expressed acute awareness of the potential consequences of parental divorce that could affect them, as well as sensitivity and sympathy toward peers who are in the process of experiencing divorce in their families. Many of the youth I interviewed expressed significant fear and reluctance regarding divorce.

The survey results also indicate that the youth differ significantly from adults in their views about the acceptance of divorce in current Indian culture ($t = 3.71$; $df = 294.36$; $p \leq .05$). Rather surprisingly, adults (mean = 3.48) see their culture as more accepting of divorce than do youth (mean = 3.07). Because youth have grown up in western culture where it is common that marriages end and sometimes multiple remarriages take place, it was expected that they would have found divorce more acceptable, rather than the adults who had been raised with more stringent cultural taboos. Nonetheless, both groups agree about avoiding divorce as a means to resolve marital conflict. Nonetheless, divorce is on the increase among Indian-Americans (Gupta 1999c; Giridharadas 2011; Ravindra 2013)

Increase in Divorce among Indian-Americans

On the surface, Indian marriage appears to be far removed from claims that fewer people are marrying and divorce rates are increasing worldwide (Fincham and Beach

2010; Cherlin 2004). However a closer look reveals that divorce among Indians is slowly creeping upwards, while the social taboo of divorce has not decreased in equal measure (George 2006; Boldt 2010). Marriages among Indians now seem to be increasingly vulnerable for a variety of reasons. One of the most significant reasons cited for this is women's access to and participation in education, which prepares them to work outside the home and to have careers of their own. Modern women are no longer faced with the inevitability of relying on marriage and a spouse for income (Gupta 1999a; Trimberger 2005; DePaulo 2006; Ravindra 2013). Derne and Jadwin (2007) note that modern education encourages women to challenge their husbands' authority, and their insistence to move freely outside the home may negatively impact marriage. Thus, educational attainment has a significant impact on when, if and how a woman decides to marry, and it also is a major factor in a woman's decision to remain married.

This in turn presents a major challenge to the prevailing system of patriarchy and male dominance, which is slowly eroding, particularly among Indian-Americans, who not only have been exposed to western ideals of feminine equality and equal opportunity, but also are living in an environment where gender equality and opportunity are normal expectations (Ravindra 2013; Rangaswamy 2000; Gupta 1999a). Within this context, traditional roles and responsibilities between spouses may have to be renegotiated, particularly with conventional divisions of labor. Although women primarily have been expected to be responsible for most domestic duties within the home, men may have to pitch in with housework and child care, particularly if a wife is working outside the home. Although such spousal cooperation with household duties generally is a given part of the daily life of American couples and has been a long time expectation since the rise

of feminism in the United States, this is a nascent concept for Indian couples, who may not be accustomed to it, or be ready to accept changes in the power structure of their relationships.

For most Indian-American parents interviewed in this study, arranged marriage has been the standard, and they have enjoyed successful unions. Those with love marriages also have stood the test of time. However, a few of the parents have been hurt deeply by difficult divorces. Of the twenty-eight adults interviewed for this study, one couple had previous marriages to other spouses, two women remain single mothers after challenging divorces, and one is a divorced, childless woman, whose family is actively trying to convince her to remarry.

The experience of Stan (62, Christian/NC) and Raizel (53, Christian/NC) illustrate some of the complexities of separation and divorce in Indian culture. Stan had a semi-arranged first marriage, and Raizel had a love marriage. Both of their first unions were fraught with tension, distress and unhappiness.

Stan: Because I have a strong, good marriage now, I use me as an example to my daughters. I had a failed [first] marriage. My marriage failed for two thousand reasons . . . It hurts me emotionally, psychologically, financially, and I've been ruined, and had to rebuild it, and that was a very traumatic process. And I believe I still suffer from that also. I had misjudged, and got into it too quickly, and it wasn't what I thought it would be . . . That is why it was trauma for me; I did not have enough opportunity to know the person . . . It is a good example for my children.

Raizel: I came to this country at the age of 22. I was previously married once. My parents are really well educated. They were not really particular that they would find a boy for us (she and her sisters); they knew that when we were away from home, we were going to meet many people; so, we would choose mostly whom we liked; they gave us a lot of insight into what to look for and how we present ourselves and things like that . . . I found my life partner, at that time, what I thought. He was highly educated and mature, and working as manager of a company. I had one child [with him] and his mother was not really happy with me because they did not arrange it, and they did not get a dowry or the things that they would usually get if they went for an arranged marriage. She had given me a lot of heartache . . . It didn't turn out to be a

good time at all for me, with a child. So I came to my house to live and we separated. He got married [again]; I did not get married for a long time. I went to Delhi with a child, my first one. She was about five years old. So, to give her a good education and to move away from the stigma from where I was, because all my relations are in Kerala and it was very difficult; they would have not accepted me at all.

Dianne: So it was your decision to separate and end the marriage?

Raizel: It was them (husband's parents).

Dianne: So basically they said your marriage is over?

Raizel: Yes! Over! He wouldn't come and see me or the child, or take me home and be with me; so, it was entirely about two years, and in the end, we decided it was not going to work.

After their respective divorces, Raizel and Stan made their way to the United States and they met through Stan's sister. They married after dating for approximately eighteen months. Each has a grown daughter from their previous marriages, and they have one daughter together who lives with them, and is a high school senior. Raizel only agreed to come to the USA at the urging of her brother, who enticed her with the promise of being able to continue her education and change careers. She noted that at her age in India at the time (she was in her mid-twenties), educational opportunities for women were quite limited:

At that time in India you cannot study after a certain age; you are limited by the age. He (Raizel's brother) wanted me to go for more studies and achieve more. He said that was only a possibility in the United States. I decided to come to see how it is, so my brother gave me the visitor's visa. I came over here and I wrote the exams; so I passed that, and then I did my RN exam and I passed that, and started working in a pediatric facility over here. I brought my daughter with me and she liked it. But then I saw how it is. If you work hard to have a house it is easier here. The economic benefits are much more accessible here than in India. I think you should get married, but I didn't want to get married for a long time. So for nine and a half years, I stayed single. Then I met my husband. His older sister and I were friends, so I came to know that he was also looking for somebody. We dated for one and a half years, and thought we are adults now; what are the differences; can we manage and live? So, we got married.

Stan and Raizel enjoy a comfortable life now in suburban New Jersey. They do not feel the stigma of divorce in their day-to-day life in the USA, but when they travel back to India, they feel the undercurrent of judgment around them. As Raizel stated, “We have to be very careful how we deal with each person. The family name is so important in India.” Because of the shame and loss of face associated with divorce in India, (George 2006), Raizel is referring to the apprehension she and her husband feel because of the certainty of negative judgment and humiliation they would face in their homeland. She indicated that when they are in India, both she and her husband are guarded about the people with whom they associate and the places they go, because the threat of gossip is ever present.

This couple has been able to overcome the social shame and loss of self-esteem that typically plagues divorced persons in Indian culture. Because they were able to establish a successful family life in the USA far away from the judging eyes of elders and peers at home in India, they are able to live a relatively calm life that is no different from any other western couple who has lived through a divorce.

Of the thirty-one youth who were interviewed for this study, only one lives with parents who were previously divorced (the daughter of Raizel and Stan), and a few others noted that divorce did occur in their families. For those youth, their personal knowledge of the details about what happened in the divorce situations was sketchy at best. Given the stigma of divorce in Indian culture, and perceived disgrace that it brings to the family, it appears that little information has been shared with youth, perhaps as a means of protection, or because of adult worry that youths’ perceptions of marriage may become tainted. Joita (43, Hindu) and Nirvash (42, Jain) are very careful about how they discuss

divorce in their family. Joita explained she and her husband are vigilant about what information is shared in order to maintain their strong belief in the value and binding nature of marriage. Her comments also illustrate the transmission of the collective notion that the selection of a spouse affects the entire family:

Yes! I think I do try to say to them we don't believe in divorce; I do talk about that; that's why it is very important that you pick the right person. I have even gone as far as saying to them that it is important that we really get to know that person, too, so we can tell you because our parents had it in their minds to pick for us. Now we don't expect that from our children; we are not telling them we are going to pick for you; but, I am trying to tell them whoever you pick is going to impact the whole family, not just you. I think it starts within our own families; most of the people in our own families have all married Indian. Currently, we have no divorce in any of our families; nobody, nobody has gotten divorced, right? (looking at her husband for confirmation). Nobody.

Joita further explained that her children form ideas about Indian marriage and family life through exposure to Indian media and movies as well as popular western television programs. She stated that she and her husband carefully limit exposure to anything they deem inappropriate for their tween-aged children, which would include programs that may detract from their perceptions of a good marriage, based on the examples that they set for them:

Joita: It is just really the Indian medium and the movies we watch. It is the things they are seeing there, and then [about] marrying Indian again. So it's through the media or Indian media and just family; they don't have much exposure [to marriage or divorce], more than that really. If somebody did get divorced we are not going to sit here and have a big conversation in front of them about it. It would be something we are talking about amongst ourselves.

Dianne: So, it sounds that you work carefully to guard what they are exposed to?

Joita: Yes, yes we do.

In concluding her comments about her children's exposure to divorce within their culture, Joita also noted some concern about peers from divorced families with whom her

children come in contact at school. Although her children have both Indian and non-Indian friends, Joita and her husband noted that they attempt to shield the children from situations which may compromise their children's notions of intact family life, so that they may not construct opinions about divorce until they are older and more capable of understanding what divorce is, and what impact it can have. Joita and Nirvash felt that there would be time for that later on, while now is the time for their children to have fun and devote their attention to school work and activities. This seems to suggest once again the developmental theory that Indian-American parents may have regarding their children's ability to handle emotional situations and regulate their responses. In protecting their children from observing or discussing divorce, Joita and Nirvash attempt to safeguard as well as insulate their children from situations they fear might tarnish the values they are working hard to instill in them.

Divorce among Indians both in India and in America creates problems for their families regarding their loss of social capital, their reputations, and their sense of family honor. When marriages dissolve, everyone suffers, not just the couple who are divorcing. After the typically grand wedding celebrations, the expectation is that the couple will ease into married life and adjust to each other, and that their respective families will blend with one another. The marriage commitment is a very public display within the larger Indian community in which each family has a vested interest (Gupta 1999b; Ravindra 2013).

On the other hand, divorce is usually a private and personal event. Yet, M. Christian Green (2010) claims that when word of impending or actual divorce is divulged, bystanders to the event are affected too. She notes that divorce doesn't only affect the

couple and immediate family, but that friends, neighbors and entire communities are touched as well. Her position is that divorce would be better viewed as a decision that has far-reaching impact, and this is especially true in Indian culture. Ravindra (2013) posits that the commitment made by the couple during the wedding ceremony is blessed by God, the community and the family, and must be revered and honored; to end the marriage is blasphemous and must be avoided at all cost. When a marriage ends, not only is life of the couple and immediate family disrupted, but the wider ties of family members as well as participation in community life also suffer (Ravindra 2013; Greene 2010). The story of Priya helps to illustrate these points.

Priya's Story

Priya (31, Catholic) had an arranged marriage in India. She described her marriage process as one in which she was not fully engaged, because she felt pressured by her parents to marry by her mid-twenties, but did not feel ready for it. At that time, she was enjoying a blossoming career in human resources within the large information technology industry in a major metropolitan city in southern India. She lived in a hostel with other young single women, and she loved her relatively carefree life, while enjoying the freedom to come and go as she pleased. This living arrangement was acceptable to her parents, because she was not residing alone, and there was supervision by the hostel staff to be certain that curfews and other rules of the house were honored. Priya's free time was filled with outings with friends to the local cinema or coffee house, and visits with family.

However, as Priya's age advanced to the upper twenties, her parents increasingly sought her approval and acceptance of one of the numerous matrimonial candidates they

placed before her. These potential spouses were located through a large network of family and friends who provided referrals, through matrimonial websites, and by intense cross-checking by her father and brother in particular. However, Priya felt she was just then developing a positive sense of herself, and she was finding pleasure and satisfaction in developing her career. At the same time, she struggled concurrently with both her own opposition to giving up the lifestyle she enjoyed, and with the pressure of her parents, extended family and friends that she capitulate to the expectation of marrying, because she might get too old to find a suitable match. Priya was told repeatedly that it would be extremely hard to find a husband as she inched toward the age of 28; the tension she felt at that point illustrated the pressure many Indian girls feel to marry in their mid-twenties (Gupta 1999b; Leonard 1999; Jain 2008). She began to feel that it was incumbent upon her to put an end to the growing strain her resistance to marriage was creating. She explained,

I realized that my parents were so concerned about my marriage, and that if I got any older, there could be difficulty in finding a match for me, and oh, then that would cause even more tension. So I accepted the next person they brought to me. There was nothing special or different about him. No particular attraction. It's just that I felt I had to do it, and to do it by a certain time, or they would be very unhappy with me. My relatives too. There was so much tension, and at least by agreeing [to the marriage], I thought I could get on with my life. But I really just wanted to continue working and to develop my career.

After a six month period during which Priya and her intended spouse became better acquainted through phone chats and occasional meetings, the marriage took place. The first few months of her marriage were "not too bad," but Priya described impatience with her new husband, and her growing abhorrence to his expectation that she do all the cooking, cleaning and shopping, and start making babies as soon as possible. Indeed at one point, she shook a wooden spoon at him in frustration during an argument in their

kitchen and said, “For this, I got a college degree?!” That contentious moment was one of the negative turning points in the marriage according to Priya and it markedly illuminated the lack of control she felt, as well as her rejection of the expectation to be submissive and subordinate to the narrowly constructed gender role of wife that her husband felt she should exemplify. She noted that each of them worked long hours in the information technology industry, and she was quite upset that he would expect her to “basically be his servant” upon arrival home after the workday. To ease the tension and lessen the workload, Priya’s elder aunt was brought into the house to assist with chores such as cleaning, shopping, cooking and washing.

Priya’s husband complained that his wife was not interested in spending time with him or making a proper home. He also became suspicious of time she spent on the phone talking with her friends and work colleagues. The couple’s disagreements on fundamental issues of household responsibility, gender equality and family expectations quickly escalated Priya’s anger and resentment about feeling forced to make a marriage commitment to fulfill an arbitrary age deadline set by both her parents and Indian society at large. Her husband was perplexed that his wife simply could not adjust to married life as it should be in his view, especially since the traditional expectation in Indian marriages has been that the woman will sacrifice her own personal preferences, and conform to her husband’s wishes (Gupta 1999b; Rangaswamy 2000; Ravindra 2013).

On the surface, Priya and her husband may have appeared to be an upwardly mobile, middle class couple who personify new models for modern Indian culture – those who are well educated, successful in their professions, and raising their children in a blend of Indian culture combined with cosmopolitan western influences. However, Priya’s desires

to be like a “new Indian woman” (Radhakrishnan 2011:49), caused friction between her and her husband. Radhakrishnan (2011) defines the “new Indian woman” as one who is marked “simultaneously through her potential for professionalism in the workplace and through her adherence to an essentialized notion of Indianness” in which middle-class respectable femininity is upheld through commitment to family life (2011:49). Priya’s longing for professional growth and success in her career, coupled with a newfound sense of independence that she experienced for a short time before marriage, were at odds with her husband’s traditional views of a woman’s role in the home. His views were old-fashioned and oppressive in her eyes. Though Priya expressed her desire to resolve the differences in their relationship, she felt that it would be next to impossible to come to mutual understanding and agreement regarding how they would negotiate their roles as husband and wife. She also was deeply concerned about navigating a married life that met both of their expectations, particularly one with more freedom and agency to make decisions within the sphere of family, which she desired.

Within a year, Priya separated from her husband, and a divorce was granted approximately six months later. Priya then was sent to live with her brother and sister-in-law in the USA where she enrolled in school and obtained a job, in order to be “out of sight, out of mind,” as she described it, thereby sparing her parents numerous questions and the embarrassment of their failed attempt to provide a good husband for their daughter. The loss of social capital, the disgrace of a child’s failed marriage and the stigma associated with divorce were too much to bear for Priya’s family. Priya explained that her mother prayed endlessly for the marriage to work out, and nearly had a nervous breakdown when the marriage completely collapsed. Her father, well-known in the

community through his work and church activities, had difficulty facing his colleagues and friends. Priya's parents felt like failures and experienced shame because in spite of their professional stature and successful family life, they were viewed as deficient in their ability to find a suitable mate for her. This sense of defeat and humiliation is prevalent among parents whose child divorces, especially because it lowers the status of the entire family (Amato 1994; Gupta 1999b; George 2006; Boldt 2010).

Priya suffered great psychological distress over every aspect of the failed marriage, but also blamed her parents for making her feel that she was compelled to marry by the age of 30, or face the shame of being an ineligible bride because of her age, and being responsible for a stigma that might be imposed upon her parents for not being able to find a suitable spouse for her. She wondered aloud about which stigma was worse, that of her parents not finding a spouse for her and remaining single, or the stigma of divorce. Either way, she felt that both she and her parents were the losers in the marriage fiasco. In retrospect, she said that she felt her husband "really was not a good match" for her, but she put faith in the wisdom of her family to choose someone who would be compatible with her. Feeling both naïve and inexperienced, she said that she "simply went along with the program," with the hopes that she would adjust and the marriage would be successful. After the divorce, Priya's family blamed themselves as well, feeling perhaps that they did not do a good enough job throughout the mate vetting process.

Resentment and bitterness over the experience has taken time to heal, but initially was compounded by the fact that Priya's ex-husband was matched with someone else soon after the divorce. Age again appears to have played a role in the quick re-matching process, as he was over 30 at the time of the divorce. He remarried and his new wife

quickly became pregnant. When she learned of this, Priya reported feeling like nothing more than an object to fulfill a role, stating that her ex-husband's family wasted no time in replacing her, as though she was nothing more than a means to an end. This elicited a bemoaning of the system of arranged marriage as well as lamentations about feeling used, used up, and useless. Priya described this period as one of the lowest points of her life.

As difficult as this was for Priya, the story took an unexpected twist and has a sad ending. Within less than two years of his second marriage, Priya's ex-husband was hospitalized and died from lung cancer, leaving behind his widow and infant child. Apparently he had an underlying respiratory ailment, a precursor to the cancer, which was not disclosed at the time of his marriage to Priya. Because he was ill occasionally during their brief marriage (which was attributed to an asthmatic condition), Priya's family felt that they were not informed fully and properly about him as a marriage candidate for their daughter. With the non-disclosure of his illness, they felt he was misrepresented to them, which unfortunately happens often according to Ravindra (2013), who reports that the truth about someone may be exaggerated or misrepresented in order to create a marital alliance.

Now that Priya is living in America with her brother, sister-in-law and their child, she states that she is relatively happy here, and she is enjoying her new job in the information technology industry, as well as proud of achieving a Master's degree. She "likes being Indian-American now," and has adjusted well to the environment and lifestyle. She regularly sends money home to India to help support her parents, and right now ignores their occasional suggestions that she look for a second husband. Priya explained that in their eyes, she always will be a "failure" unless she "marries successfully." They

continue to actively look at potential mates for her, though they do not have lengthy conversations with her about it or put pressure on her now, as they do not want to risk jeopardizing their fragile relationship with her.

However, Priya claims that she has neither interest nor intention to marry again, even though her family seems to be giving her free reign to seek a mate on her own, without any overt arranging or intervention on their part. Priya's brother also tries to prod her into dating by encouraging her to explore some of the many Indian matrimonial websites that are available, or by telling her about Indian meet-up groups that may have occasional social functions in their locale.

Priya's social life here is limited because she has no female friends in her immediate circle with whom she has anything in common. Most of her Indian-American contemporaries in her workplace are married with young children, or much older than she. Apart from feeling somewhat isolated, Priya's only complaint now is that her brother will not allow her to live on her own, because he feels a responsibility to protect her and provide a home for her, thus further reinforcing gendered and cultural stereotypes of women being weaker or unable to manage without the benefit of a male presence. Living in the same house with her brother, sister-in-law and their baby also is fraught with tension at times, because Priya feels that she is a 'babysitter on demand,' even though she is extremely close to her niece. Hence, Priya still does not have the autonomy she craves to create the life she wants for herself, or a self-directed sense of exactly what she wants for her future.

Attempts to Overcome Negative Associations

Priya's story is illustrative of the many problems that occur in Indian families who

experience divorce. Her personal saga also exposes the negative consequences of being forced to conform to parental and societal expectations to marry by a certain age and submit to parental control in this regard. Nonetheless, Indian-American parents continue to exercise control over their children's lives, especially those of girls, because it is the female who will bear the brunt of negative associations and connotations attached to divorce. Many Indian women have had to move away from their communities to heal after painful divorces, and thus must forego having any support from people with whom they have been close and familiar. Amato indicates that due to negative community attitudes, most Indian divorcées do not remarry, and resign themselves to being single for the rest of their lives (1994:211). Mantosh Singh Devji (1999) also notes that

Some Indian women are now finding themselves in the same position as many of their mainstream American contemporaries: divorced, but the standards of many of their peers within the Indian community remains unchanged. Divorce still creates a stigma and ostracism in the Indian community, leaving the divorcée isolated and vulnerable. At this point, the sexual life of these women is supposed to be over, but an increasing number of women are rejecting these old standards. (1999:170)

Ravindra (2013) disagrees with Devji, and claims that the stigma of divorce among Indian-American adults is lessening; given the nearly 15 year difference between their writings, it is understandable that this opinion is challenged. Some of the Indian-American women in this study indicated their readiness to challenge the stigma of divorce and social ostracism within their communities, as well as their willingness to voice their opinions. Rewa (36, Christian/NC), a divorced, single mother who left her husband after nearly ten years of marriage that she characterized as riddled with deceit, emotional abuse and lack of financial support, said that she feels the Indian community needs to be educated about "what's really going on here." She alludes to much covert activity, similar to the observations of Giridharadas who said, "More is going on behind

the scenes in India . . . but it was seldom acknowledged or discussed... it was a surface of poses that marked simmering change underneath” (2011:169). Rewa continued,

So many Indian marriages are not what they seem on the surface. There’s a sexual revolution going on now in India too; so many people are having affairs, young people are sexually active and virginity is not saved till marriage. There’s definitely a changing morality about love and sex. I don’t feel that my life is over because of my divorce. I am raising my son (age 6) successfully, and his father lives nearby enough to be involved regularly. I’ve started to make new friends and I’m happy and successful in my job. Why should I feel vulnerable now? I was more vulnerable in my marriage . . . It’s hard sometimes to not care about what others are thinking about me, but at work, I am no different than any other divorced person. I just happen to be Indian and divorced.

Illusions and realities of Indian life seemed to clash in many ways as Rewa described how she struggled through a very difficult time, but now she is working hard at building a new life for herself, and her first priority is for her young son’s well-being. She has ventured into the dating scene, and finds potential dates from online dating services specific to the Indian population, such as *Shaadi.com* and *Jeevansathi.com*. Though unsure if marriage will be in her future, she concentrates on her day-to-day existence, with the goals of advancing in her pharmaceutical career and providing the best life possible for her son.

It seems that more support is becoming available for divorced Indians and Indian-Americans in the form of dating websites devoted specifically to this group, as well as in the formation of support and social groups. *SecondShaadi.com* advertises itself as “the No. 1 matrimonial site for Indians looking for a second marriage.” The home page further entices potential users by beckoning them to give it a try: “So, whether you are divorced or widowed or someone looking to start late in life, give us a try... and Start a

New Life!’”³⁹ Ravindra (2013) also notes the popularity of this website for seeking potential partners for a second marriage.

To counteract the isolation that many divorced Indian-Americans feel, meet-up groups are beginning to surface in some areas of the USA. These are casual groups which meet in various locations for friendship, camaraderie and support. Bound by the common experience of having a past marriage, group members meet regularly for enjoyable activities, with and without children, including casual dinners, movies, dance parties, picnics, various trips and Indian holiday celebrations. The aim is to help members rebuild their lives in a positive fashion and to feel accepted in spite of their divorces. Although there are other numerous meet-up groups for divorced men and women, and quite a few groups for single Indian-Americans with a variety of common interests or backgrounds, it appears that very few groups are specifically designed for divorced Indian-Americans. At this writing, a search for groups aimed specifically at supporting divorced Indian-Americans yielded information about only a few groups scattered around the United States.⁴⁰ Unless this gap is filled, divorced Indian-Americans unfortunately may experience significant social isolation and be left to their own resources to find meaningful and enjoyable sources of support.

Divorce Prevention, Marriage Education, and Family Preservation for Indian-Americans

Recognizing the need to stem the tide of an alarming increase in potential divorces and family break-ups in south-Asian communities, which may be fueled in part by the ease with which divorce can be obtained in America and the lack of social stigma

³⁹ SecondShaadi.com home page

⁴⁰ Examples of these meet-up groups are iBASPSA (Bay Area Desi Single Parents and Single Agains) in the San Francisco metro area; Nayalife, located in Chicago, and Divorced Desis located in the quad state area of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

attached to it, priests, pastors and lay leaders of churches and temples increasingly are becoming involved in offering programs for their members, aimed at preserving marriages and the integrity of family life. Several churches and temples frequented by Indian-Americans now offer marriage education and family enrichment programs. Sunday school classes for both Hindu and Christian adults as well as children and youth, focus on marriage and family life as integral to the well-being of the Indian community at large.

Sam George is the founder and leader of Parivar International, a United States based charitable family organization whose mission is to build strong families in the Asian-Indian community around the world.⁴¹ In many Indian languages, the word “parivar” means “family.” This organization offers a wide range of educational and enrichment programs to the Indian-American community in the USA, including premarital training programs, marriage seminars, family retreats and educational sessions for youth. As noted previously, Sam and his wife, Mary, are the authors of *Before the Wedding Bells*, a marriage preparation handbook that considers the unique cultural attitudes and philosophical perspectives of Indian-Americans, and offers guidance to prepare couples for marital commitment. Sam and Mary acknowledged the need for ongoing assistance in helping both singles and couples to prepare for marriage:

Sam: I was in youth ministry in Indian community churches in the U.S., and we saw a great dearth of resources; a lack of process, and so much breakdown of family; and immigrant pastors not understanding what to do, how to go about relating to younger families and those who were getting married. Culturally appropriate education and care wasn’t there, and all this necessitated us to think about what are the needs of our generation and how could we effectively minister in a way that would strengthen the church, and at the same time, create a platform on which we can reach out to both Christians and non-Christians. Indians, being family centered and family aware, and family conscious, we thought, what a great way to build a bridge to the non-Christian

⁴¹ See www.parivarinternational.org.

Indians in America too . . . I think family life fitted into everything else that was happening around, and above all, God was really laying that on our hearts to do something for family. We were a newly married couple and we saw our own peers and family and siblings, and just lots of folks who were struggling.

Mary: There are a lot of marriages that happen, arranged marriages, or Indian-Indian marriages, and they are breaking down at as high a rate as any other marriage . . . The heart of every Indian is they want the marriages to work, last-for everyone, not just Indians, [but] for every person. They want marriages to last a lifetime. Divorces are very painful. Now we see marriages breaking after 20-25 years, so strong Indian marriages are important. I am seeing all these recent trends and so the whole of the institution needs support.

The need and usefulness of the Parivar ministry is confirmed by its continuing growth; the main Chicago headquarters has expanded to include a Family Care Center, as well as regional offices on the east coast to serve the burgeoning Indian-American population in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Future offices are planned for Atlanta, Dallas and San Jose. Parivar staff also organizes regional conferences to connect both religious and lay ministers, as well as a network of culturally sensitive counseling professionals in the field. The ultimate goal of all of these activities is to preserve and protect families, and to reinforce the integrity of family life as a core value in Indian-American society.

As in Christianity, Hinduism also considers marriage a sacred relationship and divine covenant (Smith 2001; Ravindra 2013). Marriage is considered a sacred bond and an obligatory duty that cannot be dissolved easily, or dismissed without serious grounds or grave considerations of the parties involved. Marriage also is associated with the concept of karma; the marriage commitment may be viewed as predestined and tied to several previous generations, and separation viewed as a sacrilege with potentially harmful consequences in future lives (Smith 2001). Divorce is a most undesirable circumstance for Hindu couples, who are expected to work hard at making their marriages successful (Ravindra 2013).

Vanita (36, Hindu) and Abhinav (37, Hindu) had a love marriage, which was thoroughly against the wishes of Abhinav's father, who felt that his son should maintain tradition and have an arranged marriage. Though they struggled with discordant family relationships for awhile as a result, their deep commitment to one another and to their marriage helped them weather the stormy times. They worked through the difficulties, and never once considered separation or divorce. Now the parents of three children under the age of twelve, they commented:

Abhinav: In Hinduism, because of strong family ties, we stick longer together. We feel the burden for good or for bad; we feel the burden of two families behind us, and try to keep it together for a longer time.

Vanita: One religious thing I will definitely say in India and our Hindu religion, we say once you are married, you are married for seven births. Once you are married, you are married forever; it is life-long, not even one life, but seven lives long. That is what we have heard all the time; everything is changing but that is the basic understanding. . . . Husband has to be faithful to the wife and take care of all her needs and wife's job is to compromise for everything. So that is what everybody is following; that is why divorce is never happening, because definitely if one person is ready in a marriage to compromise, everything will be fine. In our religion, definitely marriage is for lifetime. I don't know, just slowly everything changes, but still in the back of our mind, that is the culture we want to move forward to our kids. You have to be faithful to each other and try to keep it; there is no option for divorce in our religion.

These views express traditional values and gender defined roles of husband and wife, and of the woman having to make more compromises; Ravindra confirms that "it has traditionally been the expectation in Indian marriages that . . . the woman will adjust her needs to be consistent with her husband's desires," although she also notes that this has shifted in modern Indian marriages (2013: 56). Nonetheless, in order to instill these family values and to assure that their children understand their belief in the sacredness of marriage, Abhinav and Vanita send their children to a Hindu temple every week to learn the sacred scriptures as well as to expose them to other like-minded Indian-American

families who believe in preserving and protecting marriage and family life.

Indian-American Youths' Feelings about Divorce

Indian-American youth are taught from an early age to respect marriage as an indissoluble institution, to honor it as the basis for family life, and to regard it as an important part of their culture. Very few of the youth in this study had to think about the possibility of their parents splitting up. However in their daily social lives, Indian-American youth are exposed to peers who come from divorced families, and they are privy to the personal struggles and ripple effects that their peers experience as a repercussion of divorce. In reaction to these vulnerabilities, Indian-American youth expressed both fear and dismay about the possibility of divorce. They view it as an undesirable consequence of a struggling marriage. Additionally, as the survey results and interview snippets indicate, youth do not see divorce as becoming more acceptable in their culture. Discussing his future marriage and wife, Prabir (17, Hindu) explained his fears about divorce:

I want a long relationship with her; even if it is someone I am not completely in love with, it is OK if it is like a friend; it is OK as long as we can have a trusting, loving relationship in the future because one thing I am really paranoid or scared about is divorce and things like that. I always see that as one of the worst things that could happen to someone. I really believe in the traditional nuclear family. . . . When you marry someone, both families become married; I believe in that principle because I've seen that; that is what happened with my parents. Now it is a lot more modern view. My Mom always says, 'You better be careful when you decide who you are going to marry, because you believe that you don't want to get divorced, but they may see divorce as a viable option if things don't work out.' I still believe that I really need to put a lot of time, effort and thought into deciding before moving into marriage, mainly because of the fear of divorce; of it not working out. I really want to make sure; that is why I am so paranoid about having parent approval; making sure the families really get along. Honestly, family is probably the most important number one value to me, and any kind of break or thing that sets the families apart is probably the greatest travesty that I think can happen to anyone.

Tripta (17, Hindu), echoed Prabir's sentiments regarding anxiety about potential divorce, and her observations of American friends who have experienced divorce in their families:

Divorce – well, I am going to use the word - I hate it - I hate it; it is definitely something I am fearful of and I don't want to see that in my life, *ever!* That is something I value in Indian marriages because my Mom always tells me, 'You don't get divorced.' There are always things that they disagree about but my Mom always tells me, it would never happen; we have kids; it is just unrealistic. It is something I feel so heart-warmed about because I never have to fear. One of my best friends, her parents are divorced and every Tuesday and Thursday, she is at her dad's house and her parents are very supportive of her even though they are divorced. But so many kids, a lot of kids in my school, I see the behavior; even now, though it may have happened when they were younger, I see their behavior changing, like lashing out behavior from them; I see them acting out even though they would never admit it. One of my friends, she doesn't talk to her dad and that makes me upset. It makes me happy to know that I won't have to deal with it.

Tripta's sibling, Yashvi (15, Hindu), also agrees with the strong opinions of her sister.

She observed that her grandparents are a solid example of marriage, and that divorce weakens family bonds, something that she would find difficult to handle:

Also, I think that in the Indian culture, divorce just doesn't happen. My grandparents have been married for over 65 years, and as much as they just don't get along as much, this was an actual arranged marriage in the true definition. They were engaged at 11; they met each other a couple of times, got married at 18, and they were done. They are married 65 years. Also, I think that with divorce comes the weakening of the bond between the child and their parent.

The views of these three teenagers represent some differing observations about divorce; in one way it appears that there is an idealization of marriage and a conceptualization of divorce as being the entity that destroys the idealization. In another way, the emphasis is upon how a divorce in the family would affect them personally. Feelings of fear, anxiety, discomfort and trepidation accompany the notion of divorce, suggesting an inability to cope with the breakdown of either their own future marriage or that of their parents, because it has been instilled in them as the absolute ideal way to

live. It is clear that the possibility of being separated from a parent through divorce, or knowing that divorce jeopardizes relationships creates anxiety in them. On the other hand, for teenagers who have experienced divorce in their family, the story of it can be shrouded in mystery and obscurity, with few details shared. Rashina (17, Christian), whose parents had an arranged marriage after being introduced and getting to know one another for only a very short time, shared the story of an unsuccessful marriage in her family, and concluded with her own fears as well:

Rashina: My aunt is actually separated; she is not divorced, but I don't really know how it affected her at the time; but I know it is definitely frowned upon in our community. Divorce is not an option; you stay together no matter what kind of things. I think it was very revolutionary of her to be separated. My cousins miss having a dad, but my aunt had definitely supported them all the way. In my opinion, divorce could happen, but people would have to try really, really hard to save their marriage; but if it is not working out then like I said, you only live once so make the most of it.

Dianne: What age was your aunt when she was separated?

Rashina: I'm not really sure; it was when my cousins were real young. I'm the oldest so it was probably maybe in the 2000's that she got separated.

Dianne: Is she still living as a separated woman, and not getting divorced?

Rashina: Yes, only separated. I don't know if they are officially divorced or not; it is like such a messy situation kind of thing. Being Indian means that you kind of have more of a higher regard for marriage; especially like here in America people get married and divorced every other day. I don't think people here hold marriage to as high of a standard as it used to be and as it should be. Certainly in the Indian community we value marriage a lot; we think that God brought together two people to live with each other for the rest of their lives. People divorce in a couple of months or a couple of years, and it is like now what are you doing? But, I also understand; some people just need to get out of it. I just think people should look into what they are doing before they decide to make it official, because like my parents getting married, I was shocked; you barely know each other; I don't think you even knew each other's middle name kind of thing. What are you doing getting married? Divorce is certainly something that scares me and something I definitely would never go through until it was the very, very last option, and even then I don't think I would pull the trigger.

The opinions voiced by these teenagers illustrate their fears, and they also seem to be based in concern for acceptance within their culture should they deviate in any way from the norm of lifelong marriage. However, the high esteem they have for marriage comes through clearly in their statements. It appears that they take decisions about marriage very seriously, with strong consideration of the lifelong commitment it entails, as well as the effect that marital disruption has on the family. Additionally, limited exposure to divorce in their own families has bearing on their views, and hence may contribute to the opinion that divorce is not gaining acceptance within their culture.

Parental Secrecy and Reticence to Discuss Divorce

For Anna (18, Christian/NC), the daughter of Stan and Raizel, divorce has been her lived experience since her birth. As her parents described, the experiences of their respective failed first marriages were very difficult and hurt them deeply. They did not share information about their painful past with her because of the shame and stigma of divorce that they each had to overcome. However, because of the family secrecy surrounding the circumstances of her parents, it wasn't until she was in her early teens that she actually discovered that her parents were previously married to other spouses, and that she was the offspring of their second marriage to each other. Anna describes her revelations and subsequent anger over being left in the dark for so long:

I know that for both of my parents this is their second marriage; I actually found out about it – I figured it out. I knew I had two sisters and I always called them my sisters, and never knew the meanings of 'half' or 'step'; I didn't understand that. I figured it out basically; I was at my sister's house, and I was looking through her baby album my Mom made for her when she was really young. I saw this one picture of this guy, this man; I was like – who is that? Every time I asked her, she would never say anything; she just didn't want to bring it up. I was only like 13 at the time, and they both (her sisters) wanted me to wait until I was of the right age to understand it. But, I think I have been questioning, like, what's up with my family? I knew that something was up with my family that wasn't traditional or 100% my sister. Basically

I looked at her, and I looked at her again and said, that's your Dad! It registered to me now; she never calls my dad, 'Dad'. She calls him by his family pet name, as my aunts and uncles do. So, I never understood, and I always saw that there was a little bit of difference in the atmosphere; it wasn't like a normal father-daughter kind of relationship. I mean, they do have one; so, then that registered with me - OK, Beth is my Dad's daughter and Val is my Mom's daughter, and I am both of theirs. I remember I figured it out and I was really irritated that no one told me. . . I was really young, like one of the few memories you remember from kindergarten. I just remember we were on some part of the playground and I asked her something about our family and she said, well, I'm not 100% your sister. I said, explain me the story. Explain me the story! She said, no, I will tell you when you are much older. And I remember that to this day! I remember that I was so irritated that they didn't tell me, 'cause every time I asked about why is Val and Beth different from me, they would tell me, we'll tell you when you're older. . . When I finally found out I was really ticked; I was quite angry that they would hide that from me for so long. I think I figured this out when I was about 12 or 13, around that time. I never had a full talk with them (her parents), like sit down with them, talk with them about it. I just figured and solved it, and let it be. Now I know more about my Dad's ex-wife and my Mom's ex-husband, but not a lot, but a lot more; ever since I started hitting 8th grade and on.

Anna harbors no ill will toward her parents or step-sisters for not enlightening her earlier about her family background. She accepts the situation, and feels that she learned from the experience. As a result, she has more lenient and tolerant views toward divorce. The lack of disclosure by Anna's parents also may be rooted in their desire to protect her from anything that deviates from the traditional Indian values that they want to pass on to her, thus reinforcing the importance of marriage, the integrity of family, and the lack of acceptance of divorce in the culture.

Modern Views of Youth

In contrast to the youth who expressed negative feelings and opinions about divorce, other youth expressed their awareness of the increase of divorce happening in the United States and in India among couples, and they seem to have a more westernized, accepting view of it. Rena (17, Hindu) stated her views, which reflect a more contemporary opinion of divorce:

Even in India, a lot of people think that divorce isn't as common; I completely disagree. I know a lot of people who have been divorced; a lot of my Mom's friends in India are divorced and they live in India, too, so it's not like they live here. My best friend, his parents were divorced and remarried, yet he is Indian . . . I am just saying that I disagree with that, that divorce isn't an option.

Similarly, Sonya (19, Christian) expressed views that she formed as a result of numerous trips to India coupled with the life she experiences in America. She has traveled to India several times to see her extended family and although divorce has not occurred in her family, she became aware of what is happening there regarding divorce and reported her observations:

Divorce is kind of like a new thing...I'm pretty sure 20 years ago a lot of people didn't get divorced. It was like a sin almost to get divorced...Most of the women were kind of scared to get divorced. They didn't know if they did, how society would take them and if they would be able to support themselves. About 20 years ago if you got divorced, you were probably an outcast. People are probably going to treat you like dirt; that is what is going to happen. Now women don't care about that; they are working; they make money; they can support themselves. It is different. Honestly, that's why I feel people get divorced now; they are like, you know what? I don't want to take this stuff anymore. That is what happens in India for the most part; there is a lot of abuse there, too...Obviously times have changed...now women want to have equal rights; they are not going to take it anymore and they want to be treated as equal. They expect respect and you have to respect them as well.

Education likely will continue to be the single most important variable associated with divorce and the ability for women to recover from the financial fallout that marriage dissolution inevitably brings (Rangarao and Sekhar 2002; Kashyap 2004; Ravindra 2013). As Indian women advance their status through higher education, professional career tracks and higher wages, they will be able to recover more easily from divorce and create productive, fulfilling lives. However with Indian-American youth having been exposed to both deeply cherished traditions and profound changes of modernity regarding their cultural values of marriage, it appears that opinions about divorce will be subject to analysis of their personal beliefs, feelings and life experiences. Their views also may be

dependent upon the extent to which they adopt western values of individual choice and autonomy, and how those values affect their allegiance to making decisions about marriage or divorce that are in the best interests of the family as a whole.

Cohabitation without Marriage

Living together as a precursor to engagement and/or marriage has been an acceptable arrangement in the United States for decades, but continues to be a taboo for Indians. For some couples, cohabitation is a trial period during which they learn more about one another and themselves as individuals, and a determinant of whether or not they will formalize their relationship with a commitment of engagement leading to marriage. For others, it is a matter of convenience, extending the dating relationship into a more economical arrangement, allowing the couple to spend more time together without spending more money on outings and formal dates. Cherlin (2010) points out that the decision to cohabit initially often has little to do with whether or not to marry, but rather it centers on whether to remain single or to live with someone.

Inherent in this arrangement is the sexual freedom that comes with it. Cohabiting couples live together as married couples would, often without the emotional commitment, legal protection or religious blessing of marriage. Waite and Gallagher describe cohabitation as “a halfway house for people who do not want the degree of personal and social commitment that marriage represents, at least not now” (2000:42). Although men and women may derive some of the social, emotional and financial benefits of marriage without making long-term promises to one another through cohabitation, they also avoid complete responsibility for their partners, and are able to leave the relationship more easily without the hassle of sorting out legal issues that are common to divorcing couples.

On the other hand, as Rhoades, Dush, Atkins, Stanley and Markman (2011) note, cohabitating relationships can be more difficult to dissolve than dating relationships, both emotionally and logistically, due in part to constraints including financial investments, or shared debt or leases. When cohabitating relationships end, there usually is an increase in psychological distress and a decline in overall life satisfaction (Rhoades et al. 2011).

Cherlin (2010) adds that even though marriage is not foremost in the minds of cohabiters when they initially create the arrangement, most will either marry their partners or break up with them within approximately two years. In the Indian community, Ravindra (2013) states that while cohabitation before marriage is rare because it conflicts with core Hindu values, it is happening more often, especially with couples who seriously anticipate marriage. However, there are not statistics available to confirm this, likely due to the hidden nature of the practice, and lack of disclosure about it.

When asked in the survey if dating and cohabitation (defined as living together with a member of the opposite sex without marriage) are acceptable premarital practices and part of the process of selecting a future mate, adults and youth were far apart in their feelings. To clarify, this statement is meant to convey dating relationships that lead to living together as an unmarried couple. In keeping with Indian cultural tradition, adults (mean = 1.92) strongly disagree that dating and cohabitation are acceptable. On the other hand, youths' views (mean = 3.24) are unsure, leaning slightly toward agreement, indicating some alignment with western thought on this living arrangement ($t = -10.41$; $df = 303.65$; $p \leq .05$).

The popularity of the practice of cohabitation is understood but not approved by the adults in this study. The majority of participants did not comment on it during

interviews, mainly because it is out of the realm of their immediate experience, and most commentary centered upon marriage. However, Vanya (21, Hindu) said,

I feel like it wouldn't be approved of in our family...I think it would be the same thing like me bringing home someone who is not Hindu or Indian. At first it would be unheard of, so they would pressure me more towards the marriage before we stayed together.

The few parents who commented on cohabitation without marriage tended to be a bit more vocal, and cited the covertness of the practice as they know it. Sarvi (56, Hindu) felt that cohabitation likely occurs in more modern places in India as well as in the United States, due to the diversity of the inhabitants and culture. Nonetheless, she feels that although things are slowly changing, there is little communication about it, and in her estimation, very few young people are cohabitating without marriage:

It probably happens to a very few, to a very less extent. I'm not saying that it doesn't happen, but very, very rarely. We will rarely find out about these things. Things are changing now. Things are definitely changing, mostly in the metropolitan places, like Mumbai, Calcutta, Hyderabad. Those are more modern places because it's multi-cultural existence there. So they too have it, but we're talking about a very low percentage, probably. Parents don't generally talk about these things. If it was happening, nobody would find out, because they would try to kind of keep it low key...they would cover it up. Generally you won't hear about it. I'm pretty sure that if you come from a good family, you would stay well away from these things.

As our conversation continued, Sarvi pointed out the tight-knit Indian-American community in which she functions, and in which personal business is usually and easily found out through an extensive network of friends. Hence her feeling is that even if a young couple were cohabitating, they likely would do everything possible to keep it a secret. In the same way, youth also are aware that such private, hidden arrangements easily can be uncovered, and therefore they would have to go to great lengths to protect the secrecy of a cohabitating arrangement, or more likely put it in the context of living together as a group of friends, though even that might be frowned upon by parents too.

With added guilt and shame for hiding the arrangement and deliberately deceiving parents, cohabitation requires a significant amount of effort to conceal it for those daring enough to engage in it.

Influence of Media Personalities

The influence of relationship modeling by Hollywood stars who are cohabitating and who often are on display in the media also have bearing on the western cultural acceptance of cohabitation and having children out of wedlock, according to Sarvi (56, Hindu). She indicated with some incredulity that people of such stature in the media could be setting the standard for practices that she feels are quite alien to her upbringing and culture:

Because they are the ones who people look up to, and here they are, living with partners for more than ten years, having two, three or more kids, and they are proud to say that 'I'm not married to them,' which I feel if you are going to have a child, then give them the importance of marriage, and that's the tradition you would follow. Because this way the child is learning from you, and you see that that's what people are doing, because they don't feel there is anything wrong...then if they can do it, why can't I? And *they are role models*, the Hollywood and Bollywood stars, they are *role models*!

Sarvi indicated that she never heard of Bollywood stars in India openly living together without marriage, and certainly not having or raising children outside of marriage. She pointed out the recent wedding of two well-known Bollywood stars that was celebrated in Indian media, and the ensuing baby watch following the lavish ceremony, with the expectation that their union would produce beautiful and talented offspring in the not too distant future. However, what was not discussed in our interview is that the media representations of these personalities may not be completely truthful, and that they can be manipulated and portrayed as though they conform to typical expectations of Indian marriage. Although these well-known personalities may be considered role models in

Sarvi's view, their actual lives are unknown to the public, who may only assume that what they read about them is in fact true. Nonetheless, Sarvi felt that these media representations do in fact greatly influence young people.

Sarvi is not alone in her perception that media personalities and their lifestyles are viewed as role models, and that the depictions of the way they live their lives can affect impressionable young people. However, Kopal (17, Hindu) talked about her awareness of gossip about people in the entertainment business and portrayals of images of them that may influence the younger generation. She said,

There's a lot out there in the media about that kind of stuff, and people who make their own rules and what-not...so much publicity about who's living together, who's getting married... and in the end who cares what they do...I know what is right, and what the expectations are, so that doesn't really affect me.

Only one parent shared her disappointment and humiliation at her 23-year-old daughter's decision to leave home prior to marriage, and live with a boyfriend for a short period of time. Sahitha (49, Hindu) holds a high administrative position in her temple, and enjoys a very wealthy lifestyle. The home that she shares with her husband, three children (a son, aged 18 and daughters aged 21 and 23), and occasionally with extended family members, is palatial and decorated with touches of Indian architecture. Sahitha shed tears as the conversation we had in her large kitchen turned to her daughter, whom she described as rebellious and quite resistant to the Indian traditions that are regarded with such reverence by her and her husband:

My older daughter – we had a lot of problems with her; so, we made new rules and so she just decided that she was going to leave home. She left home and moved in with her boyfriend. I think she was out for a year, and then last January she broke up. She came back home and finished courses. Then she went to Philadelphia and stayed in an apartment for like five months, and then she came back home again. Now she is collecting money so she can go out on her own again.

Sahitha continued to be quite emotional during this part of the interview, and her embarrassment at her daughter's behavior was palpable. She hung her head low and spoke quietly; her tears were punctuated with deep sighs as she spoke about this situation. She explained that she understood the need and desire for independence that her children have, but also expressed that she wished they would value their Indian heritage more, especially since she is so active in her temple. She stated, "I think that they should have their own independence; but I think by the same token, she (her daughter) hasn't stayed home enough to pick up how to cook Indian food or do Indian things. I think today she is anti-Indian."

While sharing this, Sahitha shed more tears, shaking her head in chagrin, and saying that in her heart, she felt sure that her daughter would leave the family home again soon. As much as she and her husband attempted to be good role models of their Indian religion and culture, it seems that at this point in time, their daughter is not at all interested in participating, or in maintaining the traditions held dear by her parents.

These few examples provide only a small peek into the views of Indian-American parents and youth on the subject of cohabitation. Yet it may be fair to say that for the most part, the practice of cohabitation is not one that parents have experienced or wish to experience. It has not been in their realm of thinking or practice. However, if their children consider or practice cohabitation without marriage, it probably would not be disclosed to parents. Young people very likely would employ the strategy of non-disclosure in this situation, as is often done in dating or marital situations that parents would disapprove (Gupta 1999b; Leonard 1999). It's also notable that most of the discussion on this topic emerged from females, which creates a gap in understanding the

views of males. Nonetheless, cohabitation is more of an atypical arrangement in Indian culture, and though to engage in it may be viewed as self-assertion and resistance to traditional marriage expectations, most of the Indian-American youth I spoke with were more interested in being allowed to date and experience romantic relationships, rather than attempting to cohabitate outside of marriage. As noted in previous chapters, they are mindful of maintaining a solid family reputation, and they are aware that such deviations from standard codes of conduct can have an impact upon them as well as their families. Nonetheless, if they chose to transgress these social boundaries, they may try to be as secretive as possible about it (Maira 2002).

Singledom

With parental expectation that Indian-American youth will marry, it appears that living as a single, independent person without a partner is not an acceptable option. Yet, Americans are trending more and more toward solo living, according to sociologist Eric Klinenberg who provides some striking statistics to illustrate this: “Nearly 50 percent of American adults are single, and roughly 32.7 million – one out of every seven adults – live alone” in the United States (2012:5). Contemporary singles make up 28 percent of all U.S. households, and along with childless couples, they are more common than households consisting of nuclear or multigenerational families (Klinenberg 2012). Prolific singles scholar, Bella DePaulo, agrees: “More households consist of single people living alone than of Mom, Dad, and the kids” (2006:75). Most of these solo dwellers are women; and the majority (approximately 16 million), are adults between the ages of thirty-five and sixty-four, notes Klinenberg, who also indicates that “the fastest growing segment of the solo-dwelling population” are “young adults between eighteen

and thirty-four” (2012:5). Moreover, DePaulo claims that “Americans today will, on the average, spend more years of their adult life single than married” (2006:7). In fact, she states that “in the opening years of the twenty-first century, single people made up about 40 percent of the workforce, purchased more than 40 percent of all homes, and contributed about \$1.6 trillion to the economy” (2006:7).

Despite these significant social shifts, it seems that marriage is the stated goal for nearly everyone in Indian-American families, with few exceptions. Following completion of a good education and beginning a career, most Indian-American parents in this study expressed a desire for marriage for their children, and the youth also indicated that getting married and having a family are major goals in their life trajectories. For them, it seems that marriage is the gold standard of relationship success and it is fundamental to their feelings of life satisfaction (DePaulo 2006).

Fincham and Beach (2010) state that there is much sophisticated data to support the claim that marital satisfaction is a strong predictor of life satisfaction and well being, and that marital satisfaction is directly related to positive physical and mental health outcomes. The survey results in this study indicated that adults (mean = 4.22) agree that marriage and having a family are essential elements for life satisfaction, while youth (mean = 3.97) also lean toward agreeing with this statement, though less strongly than adults ($t = 2.44$; $df = 307.65$; $p \leq .05$). Furthermore, the majority of adults (57%, $n = 77$) and youth (57%, $n = 100$) disagree that single life is an acceptable option or a means to a happy future. These adults did not feel that their children could be happy regardless of a future marriage and children, and youth also felt that they might not necessarily be happy without marriage and children in their futures. Only 27% of adults ($n = 36$) and 27% of

youth (n = 48) agree that single life is an acceptable life path, while 16% of adults (n = 22) and 16% of youth (n = 28) are unsure about this. The only people in this study who live alone were the few divorced mothers I interviewed, and they live by themselves intermittently, when their children are spending time with their ex-husbands. None of the youth have lived alone to date. In the following sections, I address several reasons why single life may be less appealing to this population, including the stigmas associated with singlehood, the notion of the superiority of marriage coupled with the idea of partnering with a soul mate, the lack of role models for successful single living, and parental expectations for youth to marry.

Social Stigma of Singlehood

During a lengthy conversation with me at their home in the Chicago suburbs, Sam and Mary George, (authors of *Before the Wedding Bells*), corroborated that being single in Indian-American society carries a social stigma similar to divorce, and therefore it is another lifestyle to be avoided. Indian-American young adults can be faced with a barrage of questions and relentless scrutiny about their potentially married future from close family members as well as extended relatives, well-meaning friends and even acquaintances. The topic of if, when and how a potential spouse will be found and bound seems always to be at the tip of the tongue.

Mary: It definitely is a stigma to be single. Many of these young women, once they reach a certain age, stop coming to church because everybody asks, 'Have you found somebody?' It is always the big question.

Sam: Then and there they start match-making. Sunday morning you go to the church and every auntie will come up with a proposal for you . . . 'I know a boy there; I know a boy there for you.'

Mary: But now I think they may be a little bit better at that; maybe now in this day and age... When we were growing up 10-15 years ago, they would do that so much more openly, but now I think people are not doing that as much, at least not as openly.

Sam: I remember one girl telling us, 'On Sunday morning it is a psychological torture when I show up. One Sunday morning I got seven proposals. How do I account for seven boys?!' She was really taken aback with that.

Similar scenarios have occurred in families of the youth who participated in this study.

Tripta (18, Hindu) spoke sympathetically about her female cousin who had recently turned 30, and who was feeling both parental and extended familial pressure to find a spouse, especially because of the perception of her advanced age:

My cousin, she just turned 30 - I guess that is the later age - my entire family has been pressuring her for the longest time. She had been looking online, dating sites, coming to desperate measures, because she just wanted to get married... She was so upset for a couple of years because it was so hard for her; she would say, 'I need to get married but I can't find anyone.'

In the contemporary, liberalized environment of the United States, women who live alone still face more social pressure and stigma than men, whether they are single by choice or by chance, especially in their thirties and forties (Trimberger 2005; DePaulo 2006). Concerns and incessant inquiry about how, when and where a potential partner may be found and whether to have children become an inescapable part of their daily lives, particularly after their twenties (Klinenberg 2012). And nearly all single women who face this scrutiny, regardless of their professional or personal accomplishments feel demoralized, disheartened and discouraged by the lack of acceptance and stilted views of those who detract from their identity as accomplished individuals, simply because they lack a romantic partner or spouse. (Trimberger 2005; DePaulo 2006; Klinenberg 2012). The demeaning narrative associated with the observation of a woman *still* being single beyond a certain age is tinged with gendered clichés; often she is referred to or depicted

as a poor, tragic spinster, an old maid unlucky in love, depending on who is doing the observing and judging (DePaulo 2006). Trimberger also states that in the United States, “a woman without a partner is more stigmatized than one without a child” (2005:13). Unfortunately as Singh points out, gender based discrimination is common among Indians, and especially negative against women, for whom discrimination “starts the day she is born” (2010:27). For men, the term of ‘bachelor’ is less personally diminishing, and not equally fraught with negative stereotypes.

This type of discourse and scrutiny about finding a partner seems to be expected by both male and female Indian-American youth, and even though they find it annoying and tiresome, the major difference between them and their western counterparts is that they know there is strong support in finding a spouse, should they need or want it. There is less probability of taking such commentary to heart or feeling hopeless about finding a partner, because there is the built in security of family help and support in that regard. They are not left on their own to navigate the random and haphazard world of western dating in pursuit of finding a spouse. Should they find themselves without a partner and have the desire to marry, there is the wide support system of extended family and friends to help find a mate, as well as the many targeted matrimonial websites and matchmakers that are available to them. And even if these are not successful, it seems there is a difference in the sting of the stigma felt by American females who are single by choice, chance or circumstance than Indian-American females, who tend to lean more on their extended support systems. Additionally it appears that most of this discourse centers on women rather than men in both cultures.

Cultural Differences Associated with Stigma of Singlehood

When Kay Trimberger had the opportunity to attend a Women's Studies conference in new Delhi in 2008, she observed that the number of mature, single women in India is much smaller than in the United States, noting that 89.5% of Indian women between the ages of 25 and 59 are married, compared with 65% of American women in the same age group. Further, the never married women in that age group are only 2.5% in India, compared to 16% in America.⁴² Trimberger conveys a striking cultural difference in the potential stigma that single women feel; she states that the Indian arranged marriage system "serves to liberate unmarried women from the self-esteem trap;" it is not the woman's fault that she is not married because the marriage itself is a "family enterprise."⁴³ There may be a variety of reasons she is not married; not because she is unattractive, but perhaps because there was not the right match, or insufficient dowry, or poor astrological charts, or parents who may be inept or irresponsible with the process. So the blame (and the stigma) is not on the woman, but on the process. Additionally Trimberger points out that the purpose of marriage in India is not finding happiness and contentment as a couple, but creating and maintaining family ties. Therefore if a woman is not part of a couple, she is not to be pitied for not finding her happiness (meaning soul-mate).⁴⁴

Adding to the discourse on single life, Bella DePaulo explains the enigma of "singlism," her term for the way single people are marginalized and stigmatized

⁴² See dialogue with Kay Trimberger and Bella DePaulo at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/living-single/200810/single-women-in-india-conversation-kay-trimberger>. Retrieved October 4, 2013.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

(2006:10). Singlism is “the way of thinking that has become the conventional wisdom of our time: you have a serious partner or you lose” (2006:4). Furthermore, DePaulo explains that singles may gain favor depending on the degree to which they honor soul mate values. She delineates a hierarchy of singlism; if singles had a serious partner in the past, they are better than those who never did; hence divorced and widowed singles are better than people who always have been single (2006:5). If a soul mate is no longer present through no fault circumstances, then that also acceptable; in that case, widowed singles may be better than divorced singles. And if a single person is at least looking for a partner, that’s more acceptable than being partner-less and not showing interest in finding someone (2006:5). The other side of coin is “the glorification of marriage and coupling,” which she terms “matrimania” (2006:10). Basically if one has no soul mate, than nothing redeems the single person, and others “will forever be scratching their heads and wondering what’s wrong with you and comparing notes” (2006:4). This appears to be reinforced in both American and Indian cultures, with young adults expecting to be repeatedly questioned about their status, especially once they are have completed formal education.

The stigma of being single is further exacerbated by the notion of “marital mythology” described by DePaulo:

Most Americans, including single Americans, passionately want to believe that if only they find their soul mate, they will live happily ever after. They seem to find comfort in the promise that there is a predictable path through adult life and that the most important step along the way is to marry. They are invested in the thought that married people are better than single people – worthier and more valuable – and that they personally will be better after marrying. Single people who are happy, successful, and fulfilled challenge all that. (2006:246)

Hence with this socio-cultural belief, marriage becomes the superior relationship, the only one worth valuing, but as DePaulo points out, there is much risk involved in that, because once a partner is gone through death or divorce, then everything is lost (2006: 246-247). Nonetheless, DePaulo (2006) opines that in American culture, the prevailing belief is that being partnered is perceived to be superior and more valued than being single, and that is true in Indian culture too. Trimberger agrees that western culture promotes the concept of coupledness as the most desirable way of being; she agrees that the consistent cultural messages which promote marital mythology convey to women that it is only in “finding a partner, preferably a soul mate” that they can find happiness, and it is only “in an intimate couple . . . that emotional satisfaction, sexual fulfillment, companionship, security and spiritual meaning can be found” (2005:x). With such an emphasis on romantic coupledness, most other relationships are implicitly demoted (2005:x). Both of these scholars express that the women are the primary targets of these cultural messages.

In Indian culture, the emphasis is also on marriage, but in a different way. The greatest benefit of marriage is the establishment of a family and the bonds that go with it. Marriage is less about a romantic, long-term intimate partnership, and more about creating a family and maintaining family relationships (Mullatti 1995; Devji 1999; George and George 2010; Singh 2010). In this study, both adults and youth made it clear in their responses that prolonged single life is not their preference, and the majority of youth expressed their desire to marry eventually. However, many of the young women indicated a desire for an active and vibrant single life prior to marriage.

The period of emerging adulthood can be an important period of career exploration, individual development and self-focus that serves to prepare youth for the challenges of full adulthood (Arnett 2015). Because young women are no longer pressured to find a spouse at young age in the way previous generations did (Arnett 2015), this time of life can be exciting and productive. Tripta (18, Hindu) indicated that she has plans to do many things on her own as a single woman prior to getting married; she expressed a long term plan for her education and eventual marriage:

Not marrying is not an option...I definitely want to be married. [But] I want to travel the world. I want to do things before I get married. I want to go to medical school and that is a long way down the road before I finish. I know that there is going to be awhile before I get married.

Arnett (2015) postulates that the stigma of being single for this generation of youth has faded, due in large part because of the wide array of educational, travel, and work experiences available to them in their high school, college and post-graduate years. He asserts that this an important period of self-exploration and the most individualistic time of life, during which they can develop life skills as well as a better understanding of who they are and what they want from life (2015:14). For Indian-American youth, this period of individualism likely is not in conflict with the overall collectivist nature of Indian society. Both parents and youth expressed their views that this is a temporary chapter of life that leads to the next expected chapter of marriage. Sajani (15, Jain) indicated that her parents want her to concentrate on completing her higher education before dating anyone. She stated, "I have to finish my degree, work for awhile and then think about marriage." Kopal (17, Hindu) noted that she has been brought up to think carefully about how her life will be within the context of Indian culture. In conversing about the fact that she has not ever dated, but expects to marry within the next ten years, she said:

If I were an American girl, I would probably have had seven boyfriends at this point. But I know that I will finish my education, then start a career and then get married, however that will happen. I guess it [Indian culture] just shapes my character and just shows me that this is how I've been brought up and this is how my life is going to be.

Discussing her two teenage children, Gehena (45, Jain) expressed her hopes that they would follow the examples of the adults in their family and social circle as they grow up:

For both of my kids, we told them go to school, make a successful career and then get married and have a family. This is what will bring you happiness and contentment. Today we see so much of kids running around here and there, being so distracted by so many things and getting into problems. We hope they will listen; we hope they will plan it out well and we are ready to help them anytime.

Parental Expectations for Youth to Marry

Most youth expressed keen awareness of parental expectations for them to marry, whether overtly expressed to them or absorbed by family and cultural experiences, thereby underscoring the fact that single life is not a favorable choice. Rutika and Kripa are 17-year-old Hindu cousins who live in a joined family arrangement.⁴⁵ They share a large home in south Jersey with their parents, siblings and grandparents. Rutika's mother and Kripa's father are brother and sister. Kripa's father is the younger of the two siblings. Rutika's parents' marriage was an arranged one, while Kripa's parents had a love marriage. Both of these young women stated their desires to marry, as well as the fact that their parents make their expectations clear about marriage for their daughters, including the acceptability of a love match:

Rutika: I think not my Dad so much, but my Mom - she is really straight forward about it. She doesn't really care if we go have a love marriage. She doesn't want to look for someone for us; she thinks we will do it on our own . . . she has that

⁴⁵ A joined family arrangement is one in which extended family members live together in the same household. Typically the oldest males are blood relatives, and the women are mothers, wives and daughters bound by the common relationship; however there can be variations in arrangements, as indicated in Rutika's and Kripa's household. Traditional joined families are still common in rural India but have disappeared for the most part in urban India (Singh 2010).

expectation for us to get married. We wouldn't stay single (referring to her and her older sister).

Kripa: My parents feel the same way. If they wanted to talk to me about something, they would come to me. They usually are straightforward for everything.

Prema, (18, Hindu), is in her first year of college; she stated her plan to get married in the future, and that her parents likely would push her in that direction:

I am planning on getting married but if I did not want to, my parents would definitely encourage me and really tell me that I really need to consider marriage. They would tell me that I need to compare a life without marriage, and what it would be like, and they would be upset if I don't get married.

Shilpa (15, Hindu) claimed that she expects marriage for herself, in addition to her parents' expectations of the same. Like Tripta, she wants to accomplish a lot on her own before marriage, including attending medical school to become a psychiatrist, following in the footsteps of her parents, one of whom is a doctor, and the other a scientist. She also indicated an age deadline for her eventual marriage:

I do expect it of myself to get married. For my parents, it's not an issue of course right now, but I think they do want me to get married at some point in my life. I assume by sometime in my 30s, but I can't say for sure. Yes, in my 30s, at least for me, but I can't say for my parents.

The extreme importance of marriage for Salim (18, Muslim), was very clear when he stated that it is a given expectation that he would marry, and he also mentioned feeling the pressure to conform to parental expectations of marriage:

Oh yeah! It is definitely extremely important; it's like you have to get married no matter what; you cannot be a bachelor; you just can't in our culture; you have to get married; there is no other choice. No matter how old you are, even if you are 30 years old, they are still trying to find a spouse for you, literally. So far in our family, everyone got married; right now I have some cousins who are older and the parents are still searching to get them married, it doesn't matter. Definitely we feel the pressure to marry.

In contrast, expressing ambivalence about her desire to marry is Sonya (19,

Christian/NC), who thinks that marriage requires a lot of work, and she is not sure whether or not she wants to marry because of that:

I think marriage is a good thing, but it is a lot of work and I don't know if I am meant for that. I don't even know if I want to marry or not, but personally I think my grandparents would be very unhappy if I said I don't want to. I think my parents would also be upset.

In spite of her own misgivings, Sonya is aware that the important adults in her life would be disappointed if she does not fulfill traditional expectations for marriage. She added that if she chose to remain single, there would have to be a justifiable reason for doing so, but it would be hard for her parents and grandparents to imagine any reason why she would not want to marry.

Sarvi (56, Hindu), pointed out that remaining single is not “not an option, but parents prefer marriage” for their children. She shared that her younger brother never married because he has not found the right match, either on his own or through suggested arrangements; it was not a conscious decision not to marry. She said that her brother often feels like an outsider, because all of his peers and close family members are married. Though he shares a house with their father since their mother passed away ten years ago and has a well-established career, he has felt the pressure and stigma of remaining single. However, Sarvi also said that neither she nor her brother ever felt undue pressure to marry: “It wasn't like, get married, whoever you find; it was not that kind of pressure in our family.” Sarvi indicated that her brother is happy on his own, but she would be glad if he found someone with whom to share his life, even at a later age:

I would be happy if he did marry. Then have someone to share life with. It's a long time...but he has friends, so they manage; it's different for them. It's different for us; we are used to a different kind of lifestyle, and we feel he is missing something, but they have a different kind of life, which we would not understand, I guess.

In Sarvi's opinion, people are single because they haven't found the right match, not because they want to be single. She feels that something is missing from a single person's life, and that life is not truly complete without marriage, similar to the claims made by Waite and Gallagher (2000) who in making the case for marriage, report that married people are indeed happier, healthier and wealthier than singles. However DePaulo (2006) disputes that, arguing that Waite and Gallagher's claims are unsubstantiated and that they make marriage look better and more superior than it is, and consequently, makes singlehood look worse. Nonetheless, Gupta cites strong societal and cultural pressure to get and stay married, and she reiterates that Indian culture "perpetuates the theory that an unmarried individual, man or woman, is incomplete" (1999b:216).

Lack of Role Models for Successful Single Life

Similar to their western counterparts, Indian-American young women historically have not had a plethora of significant role models in their culture to positively affirm single life. As Trimberger explains, "young women today have only one culturally sanctioned option for life after the age of thirty-five – as an egalitarian couple sharing work and family life" and they "have not been able to envision a positive single life after the age of forty" (2005:xx). However, as this changes with more and more accomplished single women setting a new standard, the 'new single woman' Trimberger envisions may provide modeling for a wider choice of living options, as well as become less invisible and marginalized.

One exception to this is Kruthika (20, Hindu), who credits strong role modeling by her mother that has influenced her views on what she envisions for herself. She predicts that

she can successfully straddle both Indian and American cultures and embrace personal independence as she creates her future:

I am a 20-year-old girl born and raised in America ... I've grown up with American values and Indian values. At the same time I do understand where I am coming from and the importance of that, but at the same time I can totally see myself being well off as a single woman at the age of 30. I can see myself doing that ... It would be nice to have someone, like a best friend, character, husband, whatever you want to call him; but at the same time, I can see myself being an independent woman. Especially, with the values I've grown up with in America ... My mother is a very independent woman; she is very vocal; she runs her own business. I feel like my mom is a full step up from the other women in the Indian community. You see a lot of Indian women in the community whose husbands are rich, fancy doctors. They are like the stay-at-home wife/mom kind of character. My mom is not like that at all.

Also not visible in Indian culture is successful role modeling of single parenthood.

Though being a single parent can be a natural outcome of divorce, and there are several options in western culture for single parenthood outside of marriage, the notion of becoming a parent without the benefit and boundary of marriage is often harshly disapproved by Indian-American families. Singh notes that "out-of-wedlock birth is highly unacceptable and hence extremely rare in India," and this cultural attitude is carried over to family life in America as well (2010:21). Nonetheless, a few of the youth indicated more open-mindedness in this regard.

Quite unlike many of his peers, Ketav (20, Hindu) expressed a view that deviated from the majority of youth in this study. Witnessing the difficulties that one set of his grandparents experienced through their arranged marriage, Ketav indicated that he would consider single fatherhood through surrogacy or adoption. He understands that this arrangement likely would not win approval from older generations, and that the importance of carrying the family blood line also might be a contentious point for elders.

Though Ketav respects the elders, he draws the line at having to tacitly accept their opinions:

Getting married is somewhat of a priority, but it is not a huge priority for me. Starting a family, I made it clear to my parents I am not even sure I want to get married, but that won't stop me from starting a family and going and finding a surrogate, or maybe adopting a child. I made it clear and they are OK with that. They wouldn't even mind if the child was adopted. It will still be their grandchild, so yeah. My parents are somewhat of a hybrid between liberal and conservative, so it makes it hard to gauge how they really feel about something. I like the idea of being a dad; it is something I could really value.

Dianne: How do you think that would be accepted in Indian culture?

Ketav: Indian culture generally, in terms of the older generation, I don't think they would approve of it very much because a child won't be a part of my blood line, and I am the son and I carry the family name with me. I also carry that blood line as well, so if I bring up the child, that child will carry my name but he won't have bloodline within him or her.

Dianne: Is that a problem with elders in the culture?

Ketav: I think it might be a problem for the elders but frankly, while I respect them, I don't really consider their opinion when it comes to things like this. Mostly because one of my grandparent's marriages, they live arranged, but it worked out for the worse. They pretty much hate each other at this point.

For Ketav, having a family is important, and he is open to non-traditional ways of establishing a family. As much as there are few role models for successful single life for women in Indian culture, there also is not much discussion or representation of males without spouses or single fatherhood. Should Ketav pursue this lifestyle, he would be a trailblazer in setting a new example of an alternate lifestyle, and traversing the moral dilemmas that may occur as result of his choice.

Sex and Single Indian-Americans

Many young adults view living alone as a key part of transitioning to adulthood, and there are several advantages to it, including sexual freedom and experimentation

(Klinenberg 2012). He notes that this transitional period allows time to “mature, develop and search for true romantic love,” as well as enabling them to “socialize when and how they want to, and to focus on themselves as much as they need” (2012:31). According to Arnett, young people also “believe that they should explore different love relationships,” and that “such exploration is both normal and necessary in order to prepare for committing to a marriage partner.” (2015:84). As previously noted, sex outside of marriage is frowned upon by Indians, and rarely discussed openly (Netting 2010; Devji 1999). The protection of female virginity, suppression of desire, and containment of sexuality until marriage are expected, and restrictions on dating practices are meant to support that. That’s not to say that it doesn’t occur; in fact sex among single Indians and cohabitation arrangements are not uncommon, but they are clandestine (Patel 2006; Jain 2008). Leonard (1999) concurs that such arrangements and sexual activity are underreported, and that Indian-American women rarely and reluctantly disclose details about sexual intimacy, for fear of gossip and negative stereotypes that are associated with female sexuality. Nonetheless in America now, Indian women have choices about their sexuality that were not previously open to them, according to Devji (1999), who claims that living in America affords them permission to date and have relationships. But she notes the recurring theme of covertness, stating that “these newly found privileges are not exercised with openness. Discretion, even secrecy, is deemed vital to maintaining a good image in the Indian community” (1999:190).

In contrast however, Arnett (2015) notes that maintaining virginity until marriage no longer exists as an ideal for most emerging adults in the United States. Furthermore, Trimberger adds that sexual relationships are an integral part of single life (2005:33), and

that there's a "duel edge sword of stigma regarding both celibacy and non-celibacy ... you are damned if you do, damned if you don't" (2005:41). Recalling British author Sally Cline's thoughts on celibacy for single women, Trimberger points out that "fifty years ago it took courage for a single woman to admit that she was enjoying an active sexual life; today it takes courage for her to admit that she is not" (2005:41). Indian-American women in particular seem to be caught between acting with prudence and discretion on one hand, while also living in a culture that accepts and expects freedom of sexual expression.

Nonetheless even with these disparate views, such openness about the existence and enjoyment of sexual relationships outside of marriage was not found with the sample of Indian-Americans in this study. Whether restricted by religious beliefs, fear of parental censure, personal moral boundaries or other reasons, the Indian-American youth in this study did not address this apart from indicating that it is unacceptable. Referring to a cousin who occasionally dates, Mohita (20, Hindu) said, "Even if there is anything sexual going on, no one would know about it, at least not in the family." Nonetheless, as Anita Jain (2008) described in her memoir about searching for a mate, and as Anand Giridharadas (2011) mentioned in his discussion of changing mores in India today, there is indeed plenty of sexual activity that occurs between unmarried Indian singles. They simply don't communicate about it in ways that may trigger judgment, conflict or gossip. However, engaging in sexual freedom and romantic experimentation are two more layers of stigma that can be attached to the Indian single, either female or male, although it seems that far more condemnation may apply to women. It appears that both adults and youth struggle with moral questions regarding sexual practice, but none more so than that

of homosexual relationships.

The Hottest Button: Same-Sex Marriage

In today's contemporary society, much dialogue and publicity about marriage center upon same-sex marriage. Quite often there are media reports about which state has approved or banned the right of same-sex couples to marry, and which states are embroiled in controversial political, religious or moral debates about the right of same-sex couples to marry. However, the construct and practice of same-sex marriage are most contrary to the sacrosanct concept of marriage in Indian culture, which is assumed to be between a man and a woman, for the purpose of procreation. Heterosexual, monogamous marriage is the norm and expectation among Indian families (Vanita, 2010). In a complex western society which embraces self-expression of individuality and choice, and which questions the necessity, institutionalization and definition of marriage, Indian-Americans are faced with a broad range of possibilities for coupling and parenting that can be perplexing to traditionalists and bewildering to the younger generation who may be grappling with homosexual identities and lifestyles that have the potential to cause havoc and upheaval in their family life.

Rapidly changing public opinion in the United States in support of same-sex marriage has resulted in a seismic social and political shift, in which as of this writing, 33 states have recognized the legality of same sex marriage, and ongoing deliberation continues in other states.⁴⁶ In contrast, India's Supreme Court recently reinstated a law that bans gay sex, thus igniting controversy once again about basic human rights and significant debate about overturning the "judgment of the Delhi High Court that had decriminalized adult

⁴⁶ See David Von Drehle, 2013. "How Gay Marriage Won." *TIME* April 8, pp. 16-24.

consensual same-sex conduct” (Rao and Jacob 2014:1). The comparison between American liberal views and Indian conservative opinions is reflected in the survey question results, and in the comments obtained in interviews between the older and younger generations. In this study, adults and youth differed significantly in their opinions of same-sex marriage. Adults (mean =1.70) strongly disagree with marriage between same-sex couples, while youth (mean = 2.95) are less disapproving ($t = -8.96$; $df = 303.73$; $p \leq .05$). Adults are more aligned with conservative views of their country of origin, while youth identify with the more progressive opinions of the United States.

Homophobia and the Hidden Nature of Homosexuality among Indians

It has been my experience to hear Indian friends say that homosexuality does not exist in their culture. These assertions indicated to me possibilities of hidden personal questions of homophobia and Indian cultural identity relative to homosexuality; it also raised the possibility of broader interrogatories of the socio-cultural landscape of a nation whose citizens can make such a claim in contemporary times, in light of widespread globalization and extensive access to western media and culture which is saturated with dialogue about gay rights and same-sex marriage. Shahani noted that the same statement “has often been repeated in different discursive and political contexts in the past decade” (2009:180). In one particular example, he indicated that this was the response of Hindu fundamentalists after a screening of the 1996 film “Fire” which portrayed a lesbian relationship and the difficulty of the characters to express their relationship both in practice and in their native tongue. Right wing Hindu organizations violently opposed this particular depiction of Hindu women in a same-sex relationship (Vanita, 2005).

Even the Indian-Canadian director of the film, Deepa Mehta, stated that “lesbians don’t exist in [Indian] culture;” she further explained that “Indians don’t talk about sex . . . in a country of a billion people, they don’t talk about sex.”⁴⁷

Same-sex relationships carry a deeper layer of prohibition, constraint, and social illicitness, and hence are more deeply hidden, and certainly out of the realm of day-to-day discussion and consideration. However, Ashwesh (44, Hindu) indicated that there is more exposure to homosexuality in Indian media in recent years:

I don’t come across that kind of stuff but I do see it on Indian channels, and nowadays I see lot of things about same-sex marriages; not a lot like in other countries but yes, I never thought it would happen in India for a million years, but it is a growing concern in India too. But when you are talking about my kind of families, I don’t think it happens; still marriage happens between a boy and girl and there is a strong value of marriage.

Despite the prevalence media coverage and open communication about same-sex marriage, the adults in this study pointed out their reluctance to accept marriage between same-sex partners. Stan (62, Christian/NC) expressed his strong views about how he feels marriage should be defined:

I am a traditionalist; I believe in marriage between a man and a woman. I struggle with gay marriage. I believe gays and lesbians have a right to be living together or whatever they want, but I don’t want to call it a marriage. I think that comes from my Christian upbringing. A marriage has a lot of benefits economically and otherwise, and I don’t want them to be deprived of that; so they have a civil union. I believe they should be given that opportunity. I believe a marriage is a man and a woman in a traditional sense . . . but we have made social progress, and that is not to diminish their ability to derive the same economic benefits that marriages have. We don’t want to penalize a segment of the society because they have a different orientation on sex. At the same time, for me, that is not a marriage; that is a union.

Stan’s comments echo the debate on defining who modern marriage includes, and for him it is a man and woman, according to his Christian beliefs. Vanita indicates that the sacred

⁴⁷ See Culture, Sexuality and Politics in Deepa Mehta’s *Fire*, in *Collected Essays* by Radu A. Davidescu; <http://www.radudavidescu.com/2009/08culture-sexuality-and-politics-in-deepa.html>. Retrieved June 22, 2014.

texts of major religions including the Bible and the Qur'an contain "what appear to be prohibitions of same-sex sexual intercourse" (2005:28). She adds that Hinduism has thousands of sacred texts which "distinguish desirable relationships from the undesirable ones, not solely on the basis of the partner's gender or the sexual acts performed, but on the basis of how these relationships contribute to the greater good" (2005:28). Even though Vanita indicates that "there is no absolute prohibition of same-sex sexual relationships in Hindu texts," (2005:30) and opines that the media inaccurately depicts Hinduism as homophobic, the parents from all religious backgrounds represented in this study are strongly resistant to acceptance of same-sex marriage. Although participants did not directly mention content of specific sacred texts, they did allude to their religious beliefs as one basis for forming their opposition to same-sex marriage.

Parents' Firm Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage

None of the parents whom I interviewed would be agreeable to a same-sex spouse for their child. Representative of this is Sristi (53, Jain), who described a phone conversation she was having with a homosexual co-worker, during which she also indicated conflict about whether or not she could invite him to her home, due to her husband's disapproval:

I was sitting on the phone and I would be talking to this one, and my husband kept saying, why is he not married? Is he gay? Then later Gus (her co-worker) told me, really I am gay. So, yes, it is not really accepted a lot in Indian families. When he told me that he is gay, he asked me, 'Are you shocked?' I said, 'Yes, and I will be honest with you Gus, I don't think he (her husband) is going to accept that, so I am not yet sure whether I am going to invite you to my home or keep it outside.' I said to him, 'I am not yet sure if I am ready to answer my kids' questions either.'

Sristi indicated reluctance in approaching the subject of homosexuality with her sons, and she was concerned about inviting her gay friend to her home for fear of her husband's disapproval, as well as exposing her sons to his lifestyle and having to

answer questions which caused her discomfort. Regarding her 16-year-old son's marriage prospects, Sristi firmly stated the rules in her household: "There is a rule for my husband, that is not to marry a Muslim; everybody else is good; and my husband says and if gay, don't bring home a boy." In her home, the topic of homosexuality is avoided, and Sristi found herself in a rather awkward position of accepting her gay friend, as well as having to face conflicting feelings because he is her co-worker who could not be welcomed easily into her home. Although Sristi's son, Radhav (16, Jain), was not very interested in thinking about dating or marriage at this point in his young life, he expressed certain awareness about his parents' wishes in this regard:

They always make jokes about how not to marry a Muslim girl or someone who is too dark skinned.⁴⁸ They're strongly opposed to gays though – my dad off-handedly, sitting around reading the newspaper said, 'As long as you don't marry a guy, I am happy with it.'

Even though this seemed like an off-handed comment to Radhav, it is clear that his father meant it, especially in light of his wife's account as well. Radhav seemed to understand the depth of his father's feelings too; he nodded his head in concurrence as he recounted the conversation, but also admitted that this thought hardly crosses his mind at this point in his young life.

Sahitha (49, Hindu) expressed desires for her children to marry as well as she did, referring to being well matched with her husband, and creating a successful life. She echoed similar potential spousal restrictions for her son and daughters: "We want them to marry Indians, and certainly no BMW's."

Dianne: What are BMW's?

⁴⁸ Dark-skinned Indian females sometimes are deemed to be less attractive and less desirable than their fairer counterparts, who are described as having a more wheatish complexion. Degrees of complexion fairness often are included in matrimonial ads.

Sahitha: Blacks, Muslims and Whites.

Dianne: Oh, I see. Any other restrictions?

Sahitha: No gays! Definitely no gays! Oh my, definitely not that! You hear so much of that these days, but we will not ever accept that.

One striking thing about the conversations with these parents is the emphatic vigor attached to their comments regarding the unacceptability of a same-sex partnership for their children. This question of same-sex marriage certainly elicited strong emotional reactions from them; each of the parents noted above raised their voices and were quite forceful in tone as they expressed their views. Regardless of how much attention is given to gay marriage, the Indian-American parents in this study would be extremely reluctant to give their blessing to this category of marriage. It appears that apart from moral disapproval, consideration and/or acceptance of marriage between two people of the same sex destabilizes long-standing definitions of gender as well as cultural codes of conduct for these Indian-American parents.

Homosexuality in Indian Culture

Contrary to popular belief, the struggles of same sex love relationships and sexual experiences have been part of Indian history through literature, film, pop culture, law and religious texts (Vanita, 2002). In their collection of essays about same-sex love in India, Vanita and Kidwai dispel the myth that homosexuality is not part of Indian culture. They note that the atmosphere of ignorance about the subject can be dangerous for many Indians, who “often hate themselves, live in shamed secrecy, try to ‘cure’ themselves by resorting to quacks or forcing themselves into marriage, and even attempt suicide, individually or jointly” (2000:xxiv). Parents may regard themselves as failures, with reactions born of ignorance, if the child they raised exhibits homosexual tendencies. Yet

the parents in this study are not ignorant of the issue; however, they straightforwardly disapprove of it, and make it clear that they don't want their children engaging in homosexual relationships. Parental protection and lack of discussion about homosexuality often lead children to discover the existence of homosexuality on their own, as Sonya (19, Christian/NC) described:

The weirdest thing is I did not even know what gay was, not even heard of it. I heard of people who were transsexual, but I didn't know gay people, and then when I was 16, I was like OH!! I don't know any Indians who are gay, but I am pretty sure their parents did not accept them. No offense to anyone who is gay or lesbian, but I don't understand it. I didn't grow up around it and it is kind of hard for me to even wrap my mind around that.

Sonya also validated Vanita and Kidwai's (2000) observations, stating that gay marriage "would be very challenging for Indian parents to handle; that family is probably going to be crushed to pieces." When pressed further about parental reaction to same-sex relationships Sonya said,

I can tell you right now that Indian parents will not welcome gay marriages 100%. It is *not* going to happen. They will probably kick the kid out. They probably will never talk to the kid. There are some parents who are even more possessive; I know crazier things have happened where they are like, you know what – you are not gay and we are going to take you back to India and we are going to get you married, forcefully making them do things, which is also bad.

Sonya also expressed sympathy for these situations further stating,

For someone who was born and raised here and says they are gay – oh my God, I would feel so bad for them; I don't even know what is going to happen. The parents have to either come to a point where they have to accept it, or the kids just lie to their parents so much; it is so sad to see.

Like Sonya, Prema (18, Hindu), expressed parental disapproval as well as a lack of knowledge and discourse among her community about homosexuality:

I think a lot of Indians do not know what gay is; maybe they do; maybe they just don't tell what it is. I think it is not a big issue in India as it is here because people just don't know it. I think if a person is gay and their parents find out, they will really be upset

and they will try to find the best girl to make their child fall in love. They will do their best to make sure that their child goes straight.

Similar sentiments were expressed by other youth in this study, coupled with some ambivalence about their own feelings on the subject. Prabir (17, Hindu) was very animated as he indicated both his unfamiliarity with the subject of same-sex marriage as well as his difficulty in processing the possibility of such a union in his family:

Anyone should have the right to marry anyone they love, but I am really going to be completely honest. I have some personal qualms about it, in that it is easy for anyone to say that they advocate gay rights. Then I think about it; what if my brother told me that he was gay; what if my son in the future said he was gay? How would I feel about that? I would support him. I am going to be honest though; I would do it with a heavy heart. I would have to work hard to adjust to something as unfamiliar to me as same-sex marriage. I am a traditionalist and I would really like to see my brother or my kids go into that happy relationship with someone of the opposite sex and have a traditional Indian marriage.

Prabir's struggle to accept the possibility of a same-sex marriage in his family highlights the direct clash of traditional Indian marriage values with more liberal American values. His comments illustrate the complexity of understanding an unfamiliar subject, and an evolving sense of fairness regarding the right to marry anyone, regardless of sexual orientation. His thoughtful response reveals wrangling with a subject that often requires time and maturity to elicit and express complicated views.

Indian-American Youth Supportive of Same-Sex Marriage with Reservations

Most of the Indian-American youths who completed interviews in this study indicated that they were far more open than the adults to the possibility of gay partnership and marriage. Rena (16, Hindu) pointed out that the media fuels hype and debate surrounding the subject and stated,

I think everyone should have that freedom of choosing who they want to marry, be it your same sex or not. I think the media definitely influences all that kind of stuff; it's always on. Celebrities nowadays are finding that everyone is gay. It is almost like a

fad now, like a popular thing -- gay rights and all that stuff. I don't have anything against it; I don't think it is wrong, especially since in our modern society, things are changing; that kind of thing happens and we evolve. But I know a lot of people who think it is wrong and don't agree with it.

Many of the same feelings in support of same-sex partnerships were expressed by some of Rena's peers. Shortly before our interview, Yashvi (15, Hindu) had participated in a classroom debate on LGBT rights and same-sex marriage, and offered her opinion that love is enough as the basis for a marriage, regardless of sexual orientation:

I strongly advocate that anyone should be able to marry anyone. If they love them, then that is how it should be. There should be no restrictions on gay rights; there should be no restrictions on what are human rights. The LGBT community, there should be no restrictions on that; if you love the person, it doesn't matter if they are the same sex as you or not. You should just get married because that is just how it should be. If you love the person, marry them; if you think they are the right person for the rest of your life, then you should marry them; that is my mentality.

Yashvi's older sister Tripta (18, Hindu) agreed regarding same-sex marriage restrictions, stating, "I hate that there are laws against it; I totally disagree with anything like that. We have freedom of speech; we have things like that so there shouldn't be any restriction on marriage; I really don't agree with it at all."

Sabita (17, Hindu), indicated her support as well: "I strongly advocate LGBT rights; I don't have any qualms about it (same-sex marriage)." Yet in spite of their support, some youth stipulated certain limiting conditions and reservations about the prospect of same-sex marriage. Religious beliefs and practices were cited as a contributing factor to their viewpoints on same-sex marriage, particularly those who are practicing Catholics or Christians. In addition to being a taboo in the Indian community, Rashina (17, Catholic) stated that same-sex marriage is not acceptable in her religious group as well, even though she indicated support of the LGBT community and their right to marry:

Definitely in the Indian community you have to say that being Catholic and Christian in general just means that you are supposed to frown on gay marriage. I do have friends who are gay; it doesn't bother me; but I've always been raised as this is not correct because of what the Bible says. The Bible says a man and a woman should get married ... it is certainly frowned upon in my community, in the Indian community and also in the religious community as well.

Although Indian-American youth overall stated less disapproval of same-sex marriage than the adults in this study, it is evident from their comments that they struggle with how they formulate their views. Their opinions likely will continue to evolve over time in the same way that their opinions about divorce also are constructed. They are living in a western society that embraces both social practices, but yet these still conflict with the cultural values in which they are raised. Nonetheless, the Indian-American youth in this study seem to be poised for change regarding acceptance of same-sex marriage.

Emerging Themes and Questions for the Future

Because being married is the preferred state of social existence for Indian-American adults, a conceivable question for the future among this generation of Indian-American youth is whether or not same-sex marriages will begin to become a more acceptable alternative to not marrying at all. Will it be a better option to marry a person of the same sex in order to avoid the stigma of being single? As marriage laws in America continue to evolve and as the definition of marriage becomes broader and more inclusive, how acceptable will same-sex marriage become within this generation of Indian-American youth who continues to assimilate within western culture and adopt popular cultural values? And, is it a moral dilemma of choice and autonomy, coupled with a sense of duty and obligation to marry in accordance with parental expectations, regardless of who the potential partner is? Or will a flourishing single life become a respectable and

unquestioned choice, rather than marriage continuing to be an almost obligatory aspect of life, especially for women?

Additionally, with so many acceptable lifestyle options in America, along with plenty of flexibility in roles such as wage-earner, spouse and parent, young adults can marry later or not at all, and they can have successful careers, raise children and have loving romantic relationships over the course of a lifetime, regardless of whether or not they are legally or traditionally coupled. Although the expectations of previous generations are that young people follow a prescribed path of education, career, marriage and having children, will deviations from this route via divorce or singlehood diminish their social capital, cultural status and Indian identity?

Although Indian-American youth are articulating ideas that are new to their culture, they have not had the same framework as their western counterparts in which to develop their views. Most of the youth in this study have grown up in families that began through arranged marriages, and they have not been exposed to the diversity of lifestyles in which relationships can develop, and in which marriage and raising children might occur. They often have been shielded from non-traditional lifestyles throughout their upbringing. Furthermore, they seem to be negotiating much more than their parents ever did in terms of lifestyle choices; however it appears that parents basically do not discuss alternatives, thereby perpetuating the idealization of heterosexual marriage as the only acceptable way to live. Since cohabitation, single life and same-sex marriage all have prominent components of sexual expression inherent in them, it's quite possible that the taboo of speaking candidly about sex also creates a similar taboo of openly discussing these lifestyles.

The verboten modes of living addressed in this chapter threaten familiar constructs of marriage that have held strong for generations. As Indian-American youth continue to be exposed to a variety of lifestyle options, they will have decisions to make regarding choices that were considered unavailable a generation ago. Perhaps a future longitudinal cohort study with Indian-American youth might best address if, how and when their attitudes toward current taboos evolve.

These questions of lifestyle choice have no easy or straightforward answers at this point in time. This generation of Indian-American youths are negotiating their bicultural heritage amid significant social change, and they have much to consider if faced with a marital decision that is not congruous with the parental teaching and values with which they have grown up. Apart from navigating the process of parental approval, they also may be challenged to forge new identities and pave the way for cultural acceptance should they choose to divorce, remain single, or partner with someone of the same sex.

Conclusion:
Second Generation Indian-American Youth and
The Transformation of Arranged Marriage

This project aimed to explore the attitudes of second generation Indian-American youth regarding arranged marriage, and to decipher how they are transforming this practice in the modern age. The research has focused upon the intersection of three main areas: Their perceptions of the practice of arranged marriage; their negotiation of choices related to premarital dating activity and actual mate selection, and their cultural beliefs that are instrumental in transforming the practice of arranged marriage. While the study focused mainly upon second generation youth, the attitudes of adults also were taken into consideration to discover points of agreement and areas of contention.

This study arose from my initial exposure to arranged marriage while traveling in India. In my narrow view at the time of my first trip to the continent in 2000, I did not understand how the practice could continue in the twenty-first century, particularly with the Indian population in America. Through subsequent extensive travels in India and through this exploratory study of Indian-Americans, I discovered that arranged marriage comes in several forms, and a successful match is dependent upon numerous factors. Indian-American youth indicate that although arranged marriage may be changing, there still can be some advantages to components of the process which are beneficial to both the couple and their respective families. It need not always be viewed negatively or simply through the limited lenses of subjugation of personal choice or purposeful suppression of women.

I began this study with the assumption that second generation Indian-American youth would be highly influenced by the western culture in which they have been raised, and

therefore, they would not consider an arranged marriage for themselves. I learned that in fact, these youth have assorted attitudes about arranged marriage, and that they are not completely rejecting or indiscriminately resisting the tradition. They have deep respect for their Indian roots, their cultural heritage and traditions, their parents and extended family, and they consider all of these while attempting to create their own niche in the modern world of dating and mating.

Throughout this research project, the youth and adult participants actively and enthusiastically contributed to the discourse on arranged marriage as well as many related topics. They were very reflective in their responses, and contributed their knowledge and voices to create the themes that emerge from this study. The youth in particular eagerly related their expectations for the future, as well as their understandings of past practices through recollections of multi-generational experiences shared with them by parents and elder relatives. On quite a few occasions during the interviews, youth participants expressed their sincere appreciation that this topic was being studied, and that their voices were valued in the research. As Shilpa (15, Hindu) noted, “I think it’s important that our opinions on this should count,” thus recognizing the right of youth to make their voices heard in academic research. Adults also acknowledged the significance of study and dialogue about arranged marriage.

This study has extended the diverse work of scholars who have studied Indian-American youth and adults (Gupta 1999; Leonard 1999; Rangaswamy 2000; DasDasgupta 2002; Maira 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Roy 2002; George 2006; Netting 2006, 2010; and Shankar 2008). It also has illuminated some gaps in the literature; in addition to the discussion of arranged marriage, this study also presents the voices of

Indian-American youth as they offer their opinions regarding divorce, singlehood, and homosexual relationships.

Theoretical Implications

Several themes emerged from the data presented in this study which demonstrate that second generation Indian-American youth are not thoroughly eschewing the tradition of arranged marriage. They are clear in their desire to transform the arranged marriage process into one that is in their control. When considering future marriage, this generation is accepting of the collectivist notion of how their alliances and decisions may affect their family as a whole. Yet they also permit themselves to delve into individualist related questions of what they need, what makes them happy, and what they want for themselves. This generation of emerging Indian-American adults expect to live authentically on their own terms, whether or not they fully embrace the values, traditions and culture passed on to them by their elders. However, they will not intentionally hurt them through careless inconsideration of dearly held traditions. They are attempting to honor the collective spirit of previous generations while also carving out their own unique niche in their cultural milieu.

Although Indian-American youth have been exposed to more worldwide information than any previous generation through their expertise with technology, it appears that they have not been swallowed up by the sweeping impact of globalization. Their allegiance to Indian culture and traditions has not been erased under influences of western culture, nor has their Indian identity been completely usurped. But on the other hand, their assimilation appears somewhat uneven because of uncertainty about the intertwining of their bicultural identity with traditional Indian culture, and how this affects numerous

choices related to eventual mate selection which they will make. Several of the youth participants expressed varying levels of personal turmoil about which side of their identity is more dominant. These findings are particularly relevant to the field of childhood studies because they provide a broad view of the lived experiences of these youth as they formulate perceptions of their worlds, and as they attempt to negotiate the confluence of influences that ultimately will impact major life decisions including marriage. Although the influences of globalism and western culture are not thoroughly displacing the practice of Indian marriage traditions in the lives of second generation Indian-American youth, these factors impact their opinions and decisions, as well as their assimilation in society. However, it seems that they can have the best of both the Indian and American worlds if they can find ways to reconcile cultural differences and definitions of ethnic authenticity, as well as continue traditions that are important to them.

Throughout the study, it is evident that parents want their children to embrace their Indian identity, keep traditions intact, and embrace family. As Joita (42, Hindu) stated,

We want our children to remember that they're from India. We never want our kids to forget about their roots. That is why we take them to India; that is why we involve them in the culture. Though they may not know how to speak the language as well as we do, or might not fully understand, we want them to at least remember where they came from. I personally think that is how the Western culture differs because most of them have forgotten their roots. We hope our kids never allow their kids to forget their roots, or the importance of family.

Similarly, youth also are quite cognizant of how their generation is growing up in a world that is very different than that of their parents' era. Sophie (20, Christian/NC) commented on the eventual further modification of traditions:

It is a big cultural thing; we are the generation that has grown up here. Once our generation is older, things will change even more. Right now is this one time period

where the cultures clash, which causes some problems . . . I think when I have kids I will be less strict than my parents. Personally, I don't see me forcing Indian culture on them because once I am older, I can't imagine sticking onto this culture as much. Not because I don't want to, but because we are so saturated in American culture that eventually it is going to fade away.

Bicultural identity issues cannot be examined only from a binary point of view.

American practices, experiences and identity are not superior to those of Indian origin and vice versa. Instead, a comparison between the cultures must include analysis of many other sociological, psychological and historical factors. These would provide additional insights into the processes of assimilation experienced by bicultural youth who consistently negotiate competing cultural expectations and differences. Maira argues, and I agree, that "the experiences of Indian-American youth call for a theory of identity in cultural practice that transcends old binaries of essentialization and hybridity, while still being able to encompass both possibilities as aspects of the lived realities of social actors" (2002:195). Her study as well as this one, each illustrate that second generation Indian-American youth can "embrace identities that emphasize fluidity and multiplicity" (2002:195).

Adults in this study have portrayed compliance with arranged marriage traditions as an extension of their cultural values. Through their vivid descriptions of their own experiences, the adults have illustrated that arranged marriage is not so strange or extremely exotic. On the contrary, for them it has been pragmatic and it highlights the values of family compatibility and harmony. These are some of the advantages of an arrangement which they hope their children might embrace. In terms of social exchange, the arranged marriages of the adults illuminate the care that is taken to ensure that benefits to each partner as well as their families are maximized. The success of their

marriages is testimony to the fact that it makes sense to consider all possible elements of similarity when seeking a partner in order to lessen conflicting expectations or values, and to increase the probability of stability and satisfaction. In a much broader sense, the adults' ideals of their children's continuation of arranged marriage traditions may be viewed as a means of preserving deeply held conceptions of nation and race, and as a "nostalgia for another time" (Maira 2002:154).

Main Findings

As they move through adolescence and early adulthood, Indian-American youth navigate influences which impact their attitudes regarding arranged marriage. Most fundamentally, the majority of Indian-American youth in this study are definite in their desire to not have a traditional arranged marriage, but to exert personal autonomy in choices related to future spouse selection. They want parental approval of their marriage decisions, and although they welcome involvement of parents and extended kinship networks regarding choice of a partner, ultimately they want to be in control of the process and the decision. Although it is typical in arranged marriage practices to match specific elements of caste, class, socio-economic status, religion and education level, Indian-American youth indicate that finding a partner with the same or better educational level is the most important of these elements to consider when choosing a mate. This is a nod toward the more modern, egalitarian relationships that youth desire. Romance is a desirable component in the mate selection process, and sets a higher expectation of personal satisfaction and fulfillment in marriage. This finding differentiates youth from many of the adults in this study, for whom romance was not a primary consideration in their arranged marriages.

It is possible that youth in this study may closely resemble the typologies described by Netting in her study of Indo-Canadian youths' negotiation of love and arranged marriages: The "traditionalists" who trust their families to find a marriage partner (Sajani and Salim); the "rebels" who reject any arrangement (Sonya), and the "negotiators" who neither accept nor reject modes of arrangement, and find ways to work the cultural system to their advantage (the majority of participants) (2006:136). These categories would require further definition, clarification and study before concluding that they are accurate descriptions of how Indian-American youth are exerting personal agency in their choice of a future mate. However, Netting's typologies may be a useful starting point for such an examination.

Indian-American parents have expectations of a specific developmental trajectory for their children which include completion of education and establishment of a career, followed by marriage. Dating is viewed as disruptive to children's focus upon these goals, and early dating is perceived as reflective of a more permissive culture which encourages romantic interactions among youth. To control youths' experimentation with dating and involvements with the opposite sex, parents impose rules which revolve around sustaining traditional standards of behavior. The protection of children, the preservation of family reputations and the maintenance of appearances are driving forces in the imposition of parental restrictions on youths' behavior. Parental management of youths' social interactions also may stem from a narrow viewpoint that Indian-American youth are not capable of balancing the emotional demands of a personal relationship in conjunction with managing other academic or social responsibilities. Parental rules especially emphasize the protection of virginity and additional restrictions for girls,

resulting in complaints of gender bias and double standards, but these matters are countered by a distinct lack of discussion between parents and children about most aspects of sex.

The glaring absence of sex from social discourse about dating and marriage is clear through the interviews presented in this study. However, youth and their parents are reluctant to directly approach the subject, since sex is regarded as a very private matter and it is not openly discussed. This is a complex contradiction for Indian-American youth, since they live in a sexually saturated American culture, and yet they are shielded from discussion or expression of sexuality. This is discrepant also because sex simmers beneath the surface of Indian culture as well, as depicted in mediums of popular culture enjoyed by youth.

Youth indicate that more often than not, they abide by the rules parents set for them; nonetheless, they also admit to breaking, stretching, or ignoring rules as well. They further acknowledge that they control the amount and nature of information that they provide to parents, and that they purposely contain some details of their personal lives due to fear of parental reactions and judgments. Additionally, some of the adults state that they have done exactly the same when they were younger, and only revealed secret relationships when they were ready to marry.

Youth state that they have a right to maintain personal privacy about matters relating to the opposite sex, which they feel may justify non-disclosure of information, but they also understand the importance of trustworthiness in relationships with parents. However, it is possible that youth may consciously try to protect both themselves and their parents from negative reactions and emotions through carefully controlling the

amount and content of information that is shared with parents. Youth may display a façade of compliance with rules and traditions, and give the appearance of deferring to parents' wishes and behavioral expectations, thereby avoiding confrontation and conflict.

Nonetheless, the majority of youth indicate that they do not easily express their feelings about dating and marriage matters to their parents. Rather incongruently, they also express that it does not necessarily take a lot of work to hide their true feelings from parents, nor do they feel a lot tension when discussing feelings about following Indian marriage traditions. The apparent contradictions in these matters convey uncertainty about larger issues of trust between parent and child, as well as in interpretations of the complexities of communication between them.

The taboos of cohabitation, divorce, single life and homosexuality are inconsistent with expectations of upholding the institution and value of marriage in Indian-American society. These lifestyles disturb the collective notion of making relationship decisions that are in the best interests of family, community and nation, because they are considered so alien to the culture of traditional marriage, which is the expectation for almost everyone. Nearly every youth participant reported that marriage would be in their future, and all the parents expect that their children will marry, though not necessarily through an arrangement. The responses of study participants regarding these relationship taboos suggest that these lifestyles directly challenge the idealized notions of Indian marriage and family, and the view of traditional marriage as a superior lifestyle, and the only acceptable structure in which to raise children. To live in a manner which defies these expectations heightens personal vulnerability and increases burdens of shame and secrecy. Should these youth decide upon relationships without any commitment, or

outside of marriage, or with same-sex partners, their acceptance among close and extended family as well as the larger community may be at risk, and they may suffer harsh criticism and consequences.

Divorce is viewed by both youth and adults as a weakening of the strong family bonds and family structure that are the foundations on which Indian society has been built. While adults focused more upon the overall negative effects of marriage disruption and the attendant loss of social capital and status in family and community, youth seem particularly concerned about the emotional wounds that occur stemming from family breakdown, as well as fears about maintaining stable relationships with both parents when a split occurs. Generally, youth participants reported a low incidence of divorce in their families, but they construct their opinions based on observations of American youth in their social circle that have experienced divorce in their families. Both youth and adults recognize that divorce is on the increase in their communities, but the acceptability of it has not risen in tandem. Stigma is still attached to divorce, as it is to living singly, though the stigma seems more pronounced for females than males. Sexual expression and relationship intimacy for singles are topics that remain restricted, and these are not openly discussed.

A very significant contrast is found in the difference of opinion between adults and youth regarding homosexual relationships. Most of the youth are less disapproving than their parents of homosexual partnerships and they express either some ambivalence or support of marriage rights for the LGBT community. Same-sex relationships in Indian-American society also are associated with stigma, secrecy and prohibition.

Limitations of the Study

The findings in this research are not intended to be a complete representation of the opinions of second generation Indian-American youth or the experiences of their parents' generation regarding arranged marriage. Although the survey results and interviews provide many insights into the future of this practice, there are several limitations. First and foremost, this study was based on a relatively small sample of the Indian-American population in three specific locales: 1) in several suburban towns in New Jersey; 2) in metropolitan areas surrounding New Jersey, including Philadelphia and Staten Island; and 3) in Chicago.

For reasons discussed in the methodology chapter, the sample of adults includes relatively few Hindu participants, and many more Christian and Catholic participants. On the other hand, the majority of youth participants are Hindus, and fewer are Christian and Catholic. Therefore the balance of religious representation is unequal, and may have had some bearing on results. Furthermore, a rather small sample of 15-17-year-old adolescents participated. This study provides limited insight into opinions of that age group, although it does succeed in giving voice to them, which is seldom heard in the literature on the topic of arranged marriage. However, it is not clear whether or not a larger sample from this age group would have offered any different insights.

Additionally, only 25 combinations of related family members were included in the sample. Though a parallel set of questions was posed to mostly unrelated youth and adults, it may be useful to study family groups to gain further insight into the dynamics of family cultural systems, as well as gender and generational differences in autonomy related to dating practices and marriage decisions.

Another factor to consider when reviewing the results of this study is that the majority of participants are well educated. Most of the adults attained a college or post-graduate degree. The majority of youth participants were in their early college years and on professional career paths. Hence, those in the Indian-American population with lesser education are not well represented, and these results are not indicative of their views.

Moreover, the results of this study cannot be interpreted in terms of narrowly defining Indian-American culture, or simplifying aspects of the culture into diametrical oppositions between the first and second generations, or differences between individualistic versus collectivist orientations, or categories of conformity versus resistance. The participants in this study represent diverse religions, as well as cultures and languages particular to their Indian state of origin. Transmission of culture and cultural practices from one generation to the next may be dependent on some or all of these factors. Hence, some of the viewpoints of participants also may be reflective of these differences, and cannot be generalized to the entire Indian-American population, or beyond the Indian culture. There are complexities of culture and intricacies of individual experiences to consider, which may not be clearly evidenced in responses to the queries posed by this research.

Another limitation of the study is that it captures only a snapshot of opinions and feelings at a particular moment in time. The results presented here provide an overview of several broad topics about arranged marriage and surrounding issues, including premarital relationships (i.e., dating and sexual activity), the right to choose a potential partner (i.e., what elements to consider as well as personal autonomy), and premarital as well as post-marital lifestyles that can lead to ostracism (divorce, cohabitation and

homosexuality). Further in-depth questioning and analysis of many of the subtopics that emerge from this study may be done in the future to extract more definitive information, as well as include a factor analysis on variables such as age, gender, religion and education levels to determine which of these may be more or less influential and relevant in the formation of attitudes about arranged marriage.

Furthermore in retrospect, I would have simplified some of the statements in the survey. For example, rather than include ‘dating and marriage’ in one statement, it would have been better to isolate each of those topics into separate statements. Doing so may have provided more detailed or accurate information, instead of forcing both topics to be considered jointly.

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, the study does provide insight regarding the evolution of attitudes towards the arranged marriage process, and how the second generation of youth is redefining the process. In giving voice to Indian-American adolescents on what may be one of most important decisions of their lives, this study contributes to the field of childhood studies, and highlights a population which has been under-represented in academic literature. The study also offers an overview regarding how this population expects to exert personal agency in dilemmas of dating and decision making in eventual marriage. Additionally, it reveals issues of gender inequality which have impact upon the daily experiences of female Indian-American youth. Finally, it provides a springboard for additional research on many topics which have social and emotional significance for Indian-Americans.

Future Directions for Research

This study raises several questions for future research. First, a more thorough

examination of participants' identities as Indian-American youth and how their bicultural identities affect the expression of agency in crucial decision making processes could shed additional light upon their navigation of important life decisions such as career choice and mate selection. Manohar suggested re-conceptualizing dating in the context of bicultural identities, and also indicated the need for more research in identity formation, because her study failed to examine her participants' "identities as Indian-Americans in areas of dating, and merely explores their resistance to the restrictions of the first generation" (2008:571). Similarly, Kurien (2005) expressed that her study did not specifically address identity formation and affiliation based on factors of religion, nationality or cultural assimilation. She indicated the importance of examining how these factors impact the formulation of opinions "based specifically on their diasporic nationalism or inter-group cleavages" (2005:464).

Likewise, although this study provides an overview of some of the conflicts in decision making about arranged marriage that emerge from expressing both sides of Indian-American identity, it does not present a thorough examination of the impact of bicultural identity upon development of opinions about arranged marriage. Some of the participants voiced their conflicted feelings in this regard. For example, Kruthika (20, Hindu) said that sometimes she feels overwhelmed by her inner mental debate of who she is: "I am Indian by name and faith, I am American by birth, but I am strictly human at heart." Her words echo those of other study participants, who struggle with deciding which side of the culture they are on at any given time. To gain insights into the ways in which the inner negotiation and outward expression of bicultural identities are reflected in every day discourse about arranged marriage may provide valuable information in

determining how decisions are made regarding dating and eventual mate selection. Additionally, Daddis (2008b) noted that the breadth of personal domains in decision making varies across cultures, and Supple et al. (2009) indicated that parental autonomy granting should consider unique cultural patterns regarding participation in family decisions. These observations also may be relevant in the context of Indian-American decision making regarding arranged marriage.

Another area of focus may be upon the idealization of marriage as a widely shared discourse in Indian culture. Marriage still appears to be the signifier of transition to adulthood in Indian-American youth. But what happens if there is no marriage, or if the marriage is unsuccessful, or if the marriage involves the most non-traditional of partnerships? The harsh judgment of their parents' generation regarding singlehood, divorce and certainly of same-sex unions has impact upon the development of Indian-American youths' attitudes towards these currently verboten lifestyle alternatives. One of the compelling questions that arise from this study is the considerable difference of opinion in Indian and American cultures regarding singlehood. It has been noted that in America, sexuality is decoupled from marriage; the number of singles continues to rise, and people may very well spend more of their lives being single rather than married (Arnett 2015; Klinenberg 2012; DePaulo 2006). Singlehood for many is a norm in western culture, and singlehood no longer implies that one is virginal or sexually inactive. However in Indian culture, the apparent obligation to marry prevails for nearly everyone, unless a person is otherwise committed, such as to a religious vocation which requires one to be single and celibate.

It appears that for Indian-Americans as well as Indians on the continent, the view of

singlehood as an anomaly persists, and the non-acceptance of singlehood as a viable life choice has serious repercussions for both the individual and the family, each of whom are viewed as a failure of one kind or another. The single, unmarried individual is judged for failing to conform, failing to choose, failing to attract, or failing to maintain the reputation of the family. The family of the single person also is judged for failing to satisfy their responsibility of finding a suitable match, for failing to raise their child properly, or failing to save face.

The marginalization of single people, especially single women, is a significant problem to be endured, regardless of the circumstances of singlehood (unmarried, divorced or widowed), thereby continuing to reinforce the notion that women's value, identity and purpose for existence must be attached to a man. The divorced women in this study shared poignant stories of their unhappy arranged marriages, and they were hardly hopeful of ever finding another suitable partner with whom to share their lives. In many respects they felt that they functioned on the periphery in their communities, and they also acknowledged discomfort in situations or groups that consisted mainly of married couples. There is little support or space for these women, and they are forced to cope with loneliness, poor self-esteem and estrangement. It would be worthwhile to study these Indian-American women who find themselves in circumstances that lead to lengthy singlehood, particularly in light of the expanded educational and professional opportunities that are increasingly available to them, as well as the larger societal structural problems that they face.

Finally, a largely untapped area for research is the relationship between same-sex unions and arranged marriage within the Indian and Indian-American populations. There

is very little in academic literature which addresses this. With the emphasis still on the importance of marriage for nearly everyone in Indian culture, there are interesting implications for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in this regard. These groups are vocal in American culture regarding the demand for equal rights in marriage, yet largely silent in Indian culture.

It seems that a lot is yet to evolve in Indian culture in order to avoid the stigma of being unmarried, divorced or gay without sharp judgment. The cultural attitudes that lead to marginalization and ostracism for singles and those in the LGBT communities spawn significant concern for the emotional well-being of individuals who experience the disdainful judgment of their elders or peers. They may need support from educated mental health professionals who can assist them in coping with the ramifications they may feel in daily life. This is also true for couples who refuse to comply with arranged marriage traditions, and find themselves estranged from family members. Similarly, they also require support due to family dissent or rejection that deeply affects them. Children of divorced parents also may need professional counseling, as they may find themselves in tumultuous emotional situations quite unlike their peers from intact families.

However, since seeking counseling from trained professionals for mental health or emotional support is not widely accepted in Indian culture and also carries a stigma (Khandelwal 2002; Rangaswamy 2002; Gupta 1999b), that adds yet another layer of difficulty, and creates more predicaments for these groups. These topics are missing from the conversation and are worthwhile areas for further research. By removing them from the shadows of stigma and scorn, many lives may improve by providing a more

open, egalitarian and accepting environment in which everyone can thrive, regardless of marital status or sexual orientation.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Youth Questionnaire ~ Kindly respond to ALL the statements. Thank you.

Marriage and Family:

1. A traditional Indian marriage and family are the ideal, even in modern society.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
2. The practice of arranged marriage is still relevant in today's society.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
3. I want to have an arranged or semi-arranged marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
4. An arranged marriage is important to me for maintaining Indian family tradition.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
5. It is important to preserve Indian traditions of marriage and family in modern society.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
6. I believe that Indian marriages are a stronger model to follow than western models of marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
7. Romantic love is not a solid foundation for marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
8. My choices regarding dating and eventual marriage are a reflection upon me and my family.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
9. Girls are more likely than boys to have an arranged marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
10. I would prefer to follow modern American marriage traditions and practices.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
11. I would prefer to follow a combination of Indian and American marriage traditions and practices.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
12. Arranged marriage is acceptable to me if I can participate in the process of finding a suitable candidate.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
13. Arranging a marriage is easier and better today than in my parents' time because of the Internet and availability of several matchmaking websites.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

14. Matchmaking websites are good tools for finding appropriate potential spouses, and my parents and I will use them in the future to find a suitable marriage partner for me.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
15. Because of their knowledge, experience and skill, my parents are better able to choose a marriage partner for me than I am able to do for myself.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
16. No one knows me better than myself, so I am best equipped to decide upon my future marriage partner.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
17. Matching caste is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
18. Matching class is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
19. Matching religion is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
20. Matching socio-economic status is an important element in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
21. Matching educational level is an important element in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
22. It is acceptable to marry non-Indians.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
23. I believe that marriage and having a family are essential elements for life satisfaction.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
24. I can be happy regardless of whether I marry and have a family in the future; single life is an acceptable option for me.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
25. Divorce is the best option for couples who cannot make their marriage work.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
26. Divorce should be avoided if there are children in the family.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
27. Divorce is gaining acceptance in Indian culture.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
28. Dating and cohabitation (living with a member of the opposite sex without marriage) are acceptable practices and part of the process of selecting a future mate.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

29. Marriage with a same-sex partner is an acceptable option.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
30. The influences of western society regarding issues of relationship and marriage are more negative than positive.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
31. Romantic relationships are integral to the lives of adolescents, and I should be able to engage in them.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
32. Dating is a natural prelude to finding a life partner, and I want to have this relationship experience with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
33. I am allowed to date and relate with the opposite sex, but expect that my future marriage will be an arranged or semi-arranged one.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
34. Though my parents might want me to follow the tradition of arranged marriage, I think the influence of western culture will prevent it.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

Choice:

1. It is important to me to have my parents' approval about decisions I make.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
2. My parents have legitimate authority to control my interactions with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
3. My parents have legitimate authority to participate in decisions about my future marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
4. My parents must approve of who my future spouse will be.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
5. I want my parents to be involved in choosing my future spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
6. I have little choice about following Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that are important to my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
7. The thoughts and feelings of my parents and extended family are important to consider when I make choices related to my future marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
8. Maintaining family harmony is more important to me than getting my own way in matters of dating and eventual marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

9. I want to choose my future spouse on my own, without parental input.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
10. Personal fulfillment in marriage is more important than adhering to family expectations of duty and obligation.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
11. My friends influence my choices about relationships with the opposite sex and my expectations of marriage more than my parents do.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
12. I have a right to personal freedom in making choices about dating and marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
13. My right to personal freedom in making choices about dating and marriage is often constrained by my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
14. My right to personal freedom and happiness is constrained by expectations that I follow Indian traditions which are not relevant to me.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
15. My non-Indian friends have more freedom in making choices about dating and marriage than I do.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

Emotional Expression:

1. I carefully control the amount and nature of information I provide to my parents regarding my interactions with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
2. It is my right to maintain personal privacy about matters of relating with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
3. I disclose information about my associations with the opposite sex more to my friends, and less to my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
4. I easily express my feelings about dating and future marriage to my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
5. I express my feelings about dating and future marriage more easily to my peers, rather than to my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
6. I often hide my true thoughts and feelings about dating and future marriage from my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
7. It takes a lot of work to hide my true feelings from my parents.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

8. My parents understand and accept my feelings about following Indian traditions regarding marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
9. My parents do not understand or accept my feelings about following Indian traditions regarding dating and future marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
10. I feel a lot of tension about discussing my thoughts and feelings with my parents regarding matters involving the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
11. I feel a lot of tension about discussing my thoughts and feelings with my parents regarding following Indian traditions.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
12. I express my feelings more often and easily with friends through texting and web-based social networking sites.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
13. Forms of media highly influence my perceptions about dating, marriage and family.
 (Movies, TV, Internet, social networking, etc.)
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
14. My parents are aware that I express my thoughts and feelings about dating, marriage and family to others via texting and web-based social networking sites.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
15. My parents approve of my use of texting and web-based social networking.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
16. I easily express myself about dating and marriage matters with both Indians and non-Indians.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
17. My parents convey their expectations to me about following marriage and family traditions very directly, by talking about them openly and often.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
18. My parents convey their expectations to me about following marriage and family traditions indirectly, by behavioral example and non-verbal cues, rather than talking about them.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
19. I feel pressure to follow Indian traditions of marriage and family, because I don't agree with them.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
20. Others convey their expectations to me about following marriage and family traditions very directly. (If in agreement, provide example: _____).
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

Parent Questionnaire ~ Kindly respond to ALL the statements

Marriage and Family:

1. A traditional Indian marriage and family are the ideal, even in modern society.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
2. The practice of arranged marriage is still relevant in today's society.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
3. I want my child to have an arranged or semi-arranged marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
4. An arranged marriage for my child is important to me for maintaining Indian family tradition.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
5. It is important to preserve Indian traditions of marriage and family in modern society.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
6. I believe that Indian marriages are a stronger model for my children to follow than western models of marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
7. Romantic love is not a solid foundation for marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
8. My child's choices regarding dating and eventual marriage are a reflection upon me and my family.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
9. Girls are more likely than boys to have an arranged marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
10. I would prefer that my child follow modern American marriage traditions and practices.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
11. I would prefer that my child follow a combination of Indian and American marriage traditions and practices.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
12. Arranged marriage would be acceptable to my child if he/she participates in the process of finding a suitable candidate.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
13. Arranging a marriage is easier and better today because of the Internet and availability of several matchmaking websites.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
14. Matchmaking websites are good tools for finding appropriate potential spouses, and I plan to use them to help my child find a suitable mate.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

15. Because of our knowledge, experience and skill, my spouse and I are better able to choose a marriage partner for my child than he/she would be able to do for him/herself.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
16. My child will have sufficient knowledge of self and life experience to decide upon his/her future marriage partner without input from others.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
17. Matching caste is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
18. Matching class is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
19. Matching religion is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
20. Matching socio-economic status is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
21. Matching educational level is an important element to consider in choosing a spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
22. It is acceptable to marry non-Indians.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
23. I believe that marriage and having a family are essential elements for life satisfaction.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
24. My child can be happy regardless of whether he/she marries and has a family in the future; single life is an acceptable option.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
25. Divorce is the best option for couples who cannot make their marriage work.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
26. Divorce should be avoided if there are children in the family.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
27. Divorce is gaining acceptance in Indian culture.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
28. Dating and cohabitation (living with a member of the opposite sex without marriage) are acceptable practices and part of the process of selecting a future mate.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
29. Marriage with a same-sex partner is an acceptable option for my child.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

30. The influences of western society upon my child regarding issues of relationship and marriage are more negative than positive.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
31. Romantic relationships are integral to the lives of adolescents, and I approve of my child engaging in them.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
32. Dating is a natural prelude to finding a life partner, and I want my child to have this relationship experience with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
33. I allow my child to date and relate with the opposite sex, but expect that his/her marriage will be an arranged or semi-arranged one.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
34. Though I would like my child to follow the tradition of arranged marriage, I think the influence of western culture will prevent it.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

Choice:

1. It is my duty to control and manage my child's choices regarding associations with members of the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
2. As a parent, I have legitimate authority to control my child's interactions with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
3. As a parent, I have legitimate authority to participate in decisions about my child's future marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
4. I must approve of who my child's future spouse will be.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
5. My child wants me to be involved in choosing his/her future spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
6. I put pressure on my child to follow Indian traditions regarding dating and marriage that are important to me.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
7. I want my child to consider my thoughts and feelings and those of the extended family regarding choices related to his/her future marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
8. Maintaining family harmony should have more importance to my child rather than getting his/her own way in matters of dating and eventual marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

9. Parental input should be important to children in choosing spouses.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
10. Personal fulfillment in marriage is more important than adhering to family expectations of duty and obligation.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
11. My child's friends influence his/her choices about relationships with the opposite sex and expectations of marriage more than I do.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
12. My child has a right to personal freedom in making choices about dating and marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
13. My child's right to personal freedom in making choices is often constrained by me (and/or my spouse).
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
14. My child may think that his/her right to personal freedom and happiness is constrained by my expectations that he/she follows Indian traditions which he/she finds irrelevant.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
15. My child's non-Indian friends have more freedom in making choices about dating and marriage than my child.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

Emotional Expression:

1. I think my child carefully controls the amount and nature of information he/she provides to me and my spouse regarding interactions with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
2. My child has a right to maintain personal privacy about matters of relating with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
3. I think my child discloses information about associations with the opposite sex more to friends, and less to me and/or my spouse.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
4. I easily express my feelings about dating and future marriage to my child.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
5. I express my feelings about dating and future marriage of my child more easily to peers, rather than with my child.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
6. I often hide my true thoughts and feelings about dating and future marriage from my child.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

7. It takes a lot of work to hide my true feelings from my child.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
8. My child understands and accepts my feelings about following Indian traditions regarding marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
9. My child does not understand or accept my feelings about following Indian traditions regarding dating and future marriage.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
10. I feel a lot of tension about discussing my thoughts and feelings with my child regarding matters involving the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
11. I feel a lot of tension about discussing my thoughts and feelings with my child regarding following Indian traditions.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
12. I am concerned about my child's activity on the Internet and cell phones related to interaction with the opposite sex.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
13. Forms of media highly influence my child's perceptions about dating, marriage and family. (Movies, TV, Internet, social networking, etc.)
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
14. I experience significant conflict with my child about dating issues and matters concerning relationships with the opposite sex, which are conveyed via texting and web-based social networking sites.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
15. I approve of my child's use of texting and web-based social networking.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
16. I easily express my views about dating and marriage matters with both Indians and non-Indians.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
17. I convey my expectations about following marriage and family traditions very directly to my child, by talking about them openly and often.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
18. I convey my expectations about following marriage and family traditions indirectly to my child, by behavioral example and non-verbal cues, rather than talking about them.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree
19. I feel pressure to have my child follow Indian traditions of marriage and family, even if I don't agree with them to the same extent as others.
5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree

20. Others convey their expectations to my child about following marriage and family traditions very directly. (If in agreement, provide example : _____).
- 5-strongly agree 4-agree 3-unsure 2-disagree 1-strongly disagree*

Appendix B

Youth Demographic Information

Name: _____ **Age:** _____

Year in school:

H.S. Junior _____ College Freshman _____ College Junior _____

H.S. Senior _____ College Sophomore _____ College Senior _____

Other (fill in) _____

Phone number: Home: _____ Cell: _____

Location of Survey Completion and/or Interview: _____

State of Indian origin: _____

Religion: _____

City of birth: _____

Parents: (check one)

_____ Together _____ Widowed _____ Divorced _____ Separated _____ Deceased

If in a single parent household, please indicate which parent you live with:

Also live with: (check all that apply)

_____ Siblings _____ Grandparent(s) _____ Other family members

Have you ever traveled to India?

_____ Yes If yes, state where you went and how often: _____

_____ No

I understand the difference between a love marriage and an arranged marriage:

_____ Yes (Please initial)

I understand that I have to complete a consent form (assent form if under 18) in order to participate in this study.

_____ Yes (Please initial)

PLEASE CHECK HERE IF YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO HAVE A PERSONAL INTERVIEW _____

(Researcher will contact you to follow up and schedule a time).

Adult Demographic Information

Name: _____

Age: _____ Spouse's age: _____

Level of education completed: _____

Level of spouse's education completed: _____

Occupation: _____

Spouse's occupation: _____

Phone number: Home: _____ Cell: _____

Location of Survey/Interview (Name of temple or church and town):

State of Indian origin: _____

Religion: _____

City of birth: _____

Parents: (check one)

_____ Together _____ Widowed _____ Divorced _____ Separated _____ Deceased

Children: (how many/what ages)

_____ Sons ~ Ages: _____

_____ Daughters ~ Ages: _____

Also live with: (check all that apply)

_____ Siblings _____ Parents _____ Grandparent(s) _____ Other family members

Have you ever traveled to India?

_____ Yes If yes, state where you went and how often: _____

_____ No

I understand that I have to complete a consent form in order to participate in this study.

_____ Yes (Please initial)

I understand that I have to complete a consent form for my child if he/she is under 18 to participate in this study.

_____ Yes (Please initial)

Appendix C

Interview Protocols

YOUTH:

Tell me about your parents' marriage (arranged marriage or love match). What do you know of how it came about? What are your thoughts and feelings about it?

Tell me about your expectations about marriage for yourself in the future. What are your hopes and dreams?

Aim to elicit:

- Ideas about arranged marriage
- Thoughts on importance of marriage as an institution
- Generational differences

How do your parents communicate expectations about your future marriage with you? What are some of the topics that are addressed, and how are they addressed?

Aim to elicit opinions on:

- What pressures and tensions exist?
- Emotional conflicts (and how they are handled)
- Topic of choice
- Importance of marriage as an institution

Tell me more specifically about what your parents discuss with you, or do not discuss with you), in terms of preparing you for future marriage.

Aim to elicit:

- Expectations of parents and extended family
- If parents are concerned about maintaining or losing traditions
- What are the conflicts?
- Sense of duty and obligation
- Emotional conflicts and how they are handled
- Importance of marriage as an institution
- Characteristics of future spouse (i.e., matching caste, class, socio-economic status, education, etc.)
- Marrying a non-Indian, not marrying at all, other "choices"
- Other sensitive issues, i.e. sexuality – expression or repression

Which (if any) Indian traditions regarding marriage would you like to see maintained? Which do you think might or should change? Explain.

What are your thoughts and feelings about having the freedom to choose whom and when you might marry?

Aim to elicit:

- Degree of autonomy in decision-making (generally and broadly)
- Perception of choice – is it really a choice to marry? Is it a choice about whom to marry or when to marry?

What do you think influences perceptions about marriage today?

- For your generation
 - For your parent's generation
- Aim to elicit thoughts on:
- Ideas regarding deinstitutionalization of marriage
 - Media influences
 - Peer pressures
 - Western concepts of individualization, self-fulfillment

Tell me about your social life now. What are the parental parameters or rules that you must abide by?

Aim to elicit:

- Thoughts on dating, sexual expression, pre-marital sex, cohabitation, etc.
- Participation in school activities and functions
- Degree of autonomy; differences between sexes
- What is permissible, and what is taboo; differences between sexes
- Degree of obedience; differences between sexes
- Use of social networking/texting/internet, etc.
- What might be hidden?

When you are talking among your Indian friends, what might be discussed about changing social and cultural expectations regarding marriage in the modern world?

Aim to elicit:

- What are the struggles?
- What are the anticipated challenges for this generation of youth growing up now?
- Degree of control of parents over children and their choices
- What causes the most emotional conflict?
- What is most exciting and positive?

If you were guiding a friend regarding marriage preparation and decision-making, what advice would you offer?

Aim to elicit:

- Thoughts on maintaining or changing traditions
- Degree of choice and autonomy in decision-making

ADULTS:

Tell me about your marriage (arranged marriage or love match). How did it come about? What are your memories and feelings about the experience?

What were your expectations about marriage at the time of your wedding?

How have these expectations been fulfilled (or unfulfilled)?

What preparations did you make for meeting (or becoming acquainted) with your spouse?

--Did you date?

--Follow any specific traditions?

Tell me about your preparations and readiness for marriage. What did your parents do in terms of preparing you?

Aim to elicit:

--Expectations of parents & extended family

--If parents were concerned about maintaining or losing traditions

--What were the conflicts?

--Sense of duty and obligation

Regarding your children, which aspects of traditional marriage practices do you hope they appreciate and accept?

What/how do you teach them about these things?

What are their responses?

What do you think influences perceptions about marriage today?

--For your generation

--For your children

Aim to elicit thoughts on:

--Ideas regarding deinstitutionalization of marriage

--Media influences

--Peer pressures

--Western concepts of individualization, self-fulfillment

Which (if any) Indian traditions regarding marriage would you like to see maintained?

Which do you think might or should change? Explain.

How do you discuss marriage expectations with your child? What are some of the topics that are addressed?

Aim to elicit opinions on:

--What pressures and tensions exist?

--Emotional conflicts (and how they are handled)

--Topic of choice and autonomy in decision making

--Importance of marriage as an institution

--Characteristics of future spouse (i.e., matching caste, class, socio-economic status, education, etc.)

--Marrying a non-Indian, not marrying at all, other "choices"

--Other sensitive issues, i.e. sexuality – expression or repression

Tell me about your child's social life now. What are the parental parameters or rules that you have in place for your son/daughter?

Aim to elicit:

- Thoughts on dating, sexual expression, premarital sex, cohabitation, etc.
- Participation in school activities and functions
- Degree of autonomy; differences between sexes
- What is permissible, and what is taboo; differences between sexes
- Degree of obedience; differences between sexes
- What might be hidden?

When you are talking among your Indian friends, what might be discussed about changing social and cultural expectations regarding marriage in the modern world?

Aim to elicit:

- What are the struggles?
- What are the anticipated challenges for this generation of youth growing up now?
- Degree of control of parents over children and their choices
- What causes the most conflict?
- What is most exciting and positive?

Appendix D

Consent and Assent Letters

Explanation/Permission Letter – Parent

Rutgers University
Department of Childhood Studies
Camden, NJ 08012

DATE

Dear Parent:

Throughout the coming months, I will be conducting a study for my doctoral dissertation. I am writing to request your participation and your child's participation. The goal of the research is to find out what Indian-American youth and adults think about arranged marriage, how they express their feelings about it, and to gain understanding about the concept of choice related to relationships and making marriage decisions in the future. Altogether, I am seeking to understand how traditions of marriage and family are perceived and understood by youth, and how adults are transmitting information about these traditions.

To accomplish this goal, parents and youth will be asked to complete separate written surveys about these topics. Additionally, some youth and adults will be asked to participate in a more extensive interview. The responses to the survey and interview questions will help me to understand how Indian-American parents and youth perceive the importance of the tradition of arranged marriage, as well as how they discuss it and how they perceive the element of choice in making future decisions about a life partner.

Responses will be recorded on paper and by audiotape, but will be anonymous. No identifying information about you or your child will be kept. Initial demographic information will be collected but identifying information will not be included in any part of the study. Surveys will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Interviews will be about 30 to 40 minutes with adults and youth. There is no compensation for participation. Paper records and audiotapes will be secure at all times. When the study is completed, the paper records and audiotapes will be destroyed.

All of these procedures have been used with youth, and none has been found harmful. Indeed, we often find that youth generally enjoy talking with researchers. No information identifying any individual will ever be released. All information will be kept confidential. ***Participation in this research is voluntary, and you may decide at any time to withdraw, and/or to withdraw your child from the research.***

I hope that this research eventually will contribute to the scholarship on this subject and provide greater understanding about it in the Indian-American community. Because the results of this study cannot be known at this point, the current participants may not benefit from this research. Nonetheless, I hope that you will participate, and also allow your child to participate, in the hope that this research will lead to greater understanding about arranged marriage, and the

concepts of emotional expression and choice related to it. If you have any questions about your rights or your child's rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at 848-932-0150, ext. 2104. The address is:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
 Liberty Plaza/Suite 3200
 335 George Street, 3rd Floor
 New Brunswick, NJ 08901
 Phone: 732-235-9806
 Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me at 856-313-5585. Additionally, you may contact my faculty advisor and chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Daniel Hart. The following is his contact information:

Dr. Daniel Hart
 Department of Childhood Studies
 Rutgers University
 325 Cooper Street
 Camden, NJ 08102
 USA
 856-225-6741

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Dianne L. Fabii
 Ph.D. Candidate
 Department of Childhood Studies
 Rutgers University
 405-407 Cooper Street
 Camden, NJ 08102
 USA
 856-313-5585

Explanation Letter – Non-minor Youth

Rutgers University
Department of Childhood Studies
Camden, NJ 08012

DATE

Dear Youth Participant:

Throughout the coming months, I will be conducting a study for my doctoral dissertation. I am writing now to request your participation. The goal of the research is to find out what Indian-American youth and adults think about arranged marriage, how they express their feelings about it, and to gain understanding about the concept of choice related to relationships and making marriage decisions in the future. Altogether, I am seeking to understand how traditions of marriage and family are perceived and understood by youth, and how adults are transmitting information about these traditions.

To accomplish this goal, parents and youth will be asked to complete separate written surveys about these topics. Additionally, some youth and adults will be asked to participate in a more extensive interview. The responses to the survey and interview questions will help me to understand how Indian-American youth and their parents perceive the importance of the tradition of arranged marriage, as well as how they discuss it and how they perceive the element of choice in making future decisions about a life partner.

Responses will be recorded on paper and by audiotape, but will be anonymous and completely confidential. No identifying information about you will be kept. Initial demographic information will be collected but identifying information will not be included in any part of the study. Surveys will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Interviews will be about 30 to 40 minutes. There is no compensation for participation. Paper records and audiotapes will be secure at all times. When the study is completed, the paper records and audiotapes will be destroyed.

All of these procedures have been used with youth, and none has been found harmful. Indeed, we often find that youth generally enjoy talking with researchers. No information identifying any individual will ever be released. All information will be kept confidential. ***Participation in this research is voluntary, and you may decide at any time to withdraw from the research.***

I hope that this research eventually will contribute to the scholarship on this subject and provide greater understanding about it in the Indian-American community. Because the results of this study cannot be known at this point, the current participants may not benefit from this research. Nonetheless, I hope that you will participate. It is my desire that this research will lead to greater understanding about arranged marriage, and the concepts of emotional expression and choice related to it. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at 848-932-0150, ext. 2104. The address is:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza/Suite 3200
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If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me at 856-313-5585. Additionally, you may contact my faculty advisor and chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Daniel Hart. The following is his contact information:

Dr. Daniel Hart
Department of Childhood Studies
Rutgers University
325 Cooper Street
Camden, NJ 08102
USA
856-225-6741

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Dianne L. Fabii
Department of Childhood Studies
Rutgers University
405-407 Cooper Street
Camden, NJ 08102
USA
856-313-5585

Consent Form for Youth (ages 18-20) and Adults:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to complete a survey/answer questions and discuss your opinions (circle one or both as applicable). The goal of the research has been outlined in the attached letter. Note that you do not have to answer any question if you don't want to do so. You may stop the survey and/or interview at any time. There are no negative consequences associated with you either deciding not to participate, or ending the survey or interview once it has started. All of your responses will be completely confidential. Parents will not have access to their children's responses, nor will youth have access to a parent's responses. Adults and youth will be interviewed separately. All interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one basis with the researcher. Your name and any identifying information you give will be changed on the written transcript of the interview. You have the right to review the written transcript and to delete any information that you do not want to be included in it, even after the survey and/or interview has concluded.

I understand that Ms. Fabii will be the principal investigator for this study, and only she will conduct the surveys and interviews. I also understand that records of the surveys and interviews will be secured, and that paper records and audiotapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Please check one of the options below:

- ☐ I will participate in this research.
☐ I will not participate in this research.

Please check one of the options below about audio recording:

- ☐ I give permission for my voice to be recorded.
☐ I do not give permission for my voice to be recorded.

Child Abuse Disclosure: Please note that should any report of child abuse be disclosed to the researcher, she has the duty to report such disclosure to child welfare authorities.

If you plan to participate, please provide the information below (please print):

I have read and understand the above information and I voluntarily consent to participate in this project:

My name: _____

My signature: _____

Date: _____

OPTIONAL: If you would like to receive a copy of the research report when it is complete, please indicate here: YES _____ NO _____

Please return this permission slip to Ms. Fabii, the principal investigator of this study. Thank you.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date _____

Youth/Adult Initials: _____

(CONSENT form for students recruited from Rutgers University)

Consent Form for Youth (ages 18-20)

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to complete a survey. The goal of the research is to discover opinions of youth about arranged marriage, how they express their feelings about it, and to gain understanding about the concept of choice related to relationships and making marriage decisions in the future. Altogether, I am seeking to understand how traditions of marriage and family are perceived and understood by youth. Note that you do not have to answer any question if you don't want to do so. You may stop the survey at any time. There are no negative consequences associated with you either deciding not to participate, or ending the survey once it has started. All of your responses will be completely confidential. Your name and any identifying information you give will not be indicated in the tabulated results of the survey.

I understand that Ms. Fabii will be the principal investigator for this study, and only she will conduct the surveys. I also understand that records of the surveys will be secured, and that paper records will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Please check one of the options below:

☐ I will participate in this research.

☐ I will not participate in this research.

Child Abuse Disclosure: Please note that should any report of child abuse be disclosed to the researcher, she has the duty to report such disclosure to child welfare authorities.

If you plan to participate, please provide the information below (please print):

I have read and understand the above information and I voluntarily consent to participate in this project:

My name: _____

My signature: _____

Date: _____

OPTIONAL: If you would like to receive a copy of the research report when it is complete, please indicate here: YES _____ NO _____

Please return this consent form to Ms. Fabii, the principal investigator of this study. Thank you.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date _____

Youth Initials: _____

NOTE: When you submit a completed survey, your name will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 Starbucks gift card. Thank you for your participation.

Dianne Fabii
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Childhood Studies
Rutgers-Camden
856-313-5585

Assent Letter for Minor Youth (under age 18):

Dear Minor Youth Participant:

I am studying about Indian-American youth and what they think about traditions of arranged marriage. I also want to learn how they express their feelings about it, and how they understand the concept of choice related to relationships and making marriage decisions in the future. Altogether, I am seeking to understand how traditions of marriage are perceived and understood by youth, and how adults are transmitting information about these traditions.

To accomplish this goal, I am asking for your permission to study you. You will be asked to complete a written survey about these topics. Additionally I might ask you some additional interview questions. The responses to the survey and interview questions will help me to understand how Indian-American youth and their parents perceive the importance of the tradition of arranged marriage, as well as how they discuss it and how they perceive the element of choice in making future decisions about a life partner.

The study is not about any youth in particular. I want to learn about Indian-American youth and their feelings about these topics in general. No one will know what you say to me. Your responses will be kept private. All records of your responses will be destroyed when the study is completed.

You don't have to be in this study. Even if you agree to be in it, you can stop being in it if you want to.

I hope that this research will help people in the Indian-American community and people outside of it to understand more about youth and their feelings about Indian traditions of marriage and family life.

If you agree to be in this study, please sign the assent form. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Dianne Fabii
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Childhood Studies
Rutgers University
Camden, NJ 08102
856-313-5585

Assent Form for Minor Youth (under age 18):

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to complete a survey/answer questions and discuss your opinions (circle one or both as applicable). The goal of the research has been outlined in the attached letter. Note that you do not have to answer any question if you don't want to do so. You may stop the survey and/or interview at any time. There are no negative consequences associated with you either deciding not to participate, or ending the survey or interview once it has started. All of your responses will be completely confidential. Parents will not have access to their children's responses, nor will youth have access to a parent's responses. Adults and youth will be interviewed separately. All interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one basis with the researcher. Your name and any identifying information you give will be changed on the written transcript of the interview. You have the right to review the written transcript and to delete any information that you do not want to be included in it, even after the survey and/or interview has concluded.

I have read the attached letter describing the research proposed by Ms. Fabii. I understand that she will be the principal investigator for this study, and only she will conduct the survey and/or interview me. I also understand that both paper and audiotape records of my responses will be destroyed when the study is finished.

Please check one of the options below:

- ☐ I will participate in this research.
☐ I will not participate in this research.

Please check one of the options below about audio recording:

- ☐ I give permission for my voice to be recorded.
☐ I do not give permission for my voice to be recorded.

Child Abuse Disclosure: Please note that should any report of child abuse be disclosed to the researcher, she has the duty to report such disclosure to child welfare authorities.

If you plan to participate, please provide the information below (please print):

I have read and understand the above information and I voluntarily consent to participate in this project:

My name: _____

My signature: _____

Date: _____

OPTIONAL: If you would like to receive a copy of the research report when it is complete, please indicate here: YES _____ NO _____

Please return this permission slip to Ms. Fabii, the principal investigator of this study. Thank you.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date _____

Youth Initials: _____

Permission Slip for Minor Youth (below age 18):

I have read the attached letter describing the research proposed by Ms. Fabii. I understand that she will be the principal investigator for this study, and only she will conduct the surveys and interviews. I also understand that records of the surveys and interviews will be secured, and that paper records and audiotapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Please check one of the options below:

_____ I give permission for my child to participate in this research.

_____ I do not want my child to participate in this research.

Please check one of the options below about audio recording:

_____ I give permission for my child's voice to be recorded.

_____ I do not give permission for my child's voice to be recorded.

If your child will participate, please provide the information below (please print):

My name: _____

My child's name: _____

My signature: _____

Date: _____

OPTIONAL: If you would like to receive a copy of the research report when it is complete, please indicate here: YES _____ NO _____

Please return this permission slip to Ms. Fabii, the principal investigator of this study.
Thank you.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date _____

Parent Initials: _____

Appendix E

Places of Family Origin of Adult Participants

Place of Family Origin	Number of Adults
Andra Pradesh	4
Bihar	1
Goa	1
Gujarat	23
Karnataka	1
Kerala	62
Maharashtra	8
Malaysia	1
New Delhi	2
Punjab	2
Rajasthan	1
Tamilnadu	25
Uttar Pradesh	2
West Bengal	1
No Response	1
TOTAL	135

Places of Family Origin of Youth Participants

Place of Family Origin	Number of Youth
Andra Pradesh	20
Bihar	4
Goa	2
Gujarat	61
Haryana	1
Karnataka	9
Kerala	28
Maharashtra	15
New Delhi	7
Orissa	1
Punjab	8
Rajasthan	1
Tamilnadu	12
Uttar Pradesh	6
West Bengal	1
TOTAL	176

Appendix F

Religious Backgrounds of Study Participants

Age Range	Hindu	Jain	Muslim	Catholic	Christian/NC	Sikh	Other	Total
Youth 15 - 17	13	4	0	4	3	0	0	24
Youth 18 -21	97	3	7	13	14	6	12	152
Adults 30 - 67	37	9	0	39	49	1	0	135

Appendix G

Ages Ranges of Study Participants

Age Ranges	Males	Females
15 - 17	7	17
18 - 21	66	86
30 - 67	61	74
TOTALS	134	177

Education Levels of Participants

School Year	Males 15-17	Females 15-17	Males 18-21	Females 18-21
High School Sophomore	3	8		
High School Junior	2	1		
High School Senior	1	6		3
College Freshman	1	2	22	23
College Sophomore			18	18
College Junior			18	25
College Senior			6	10
5 th Year College			2	7
TOTALS	7	17	66	86

Level of Education Completed	Adults Ages 30-67
High School	9
2 Year College	7
4 Year College	51
Master's Degree	55
Doctoral Degree	13
TOTALS	135

Appendix H

Household Information of Participants

Household Makeup

Parental Status	Youth Households	Adult Households
Together	171	97
Widowed	2	22
Divorced	3	0
Deceased	0	16

Travel One or More Times to India

Age Group	Traveled	Have Not Traveled
Adults 30 - 67	129	6
Youth 15 - 17	23	1
Youth 18 - 21	147	5
TOTALS	299	12

Appendix I

Locations of Survey Completion

Location of Survey - Adults	Number of Adults
Berlin, NJ	4
Cherry Hill, NJ	1
Chicago, IL	4
Haddonfield, NJ	2
Iselin, NJ	19
Marlton, NJ	6
Online – Survey Monkey	68
Parlin, NJ	6
Staten Island, NY	14
Voorhees, NJ	11
TOTAL	135

Location of Survey - Youth	Number of Youth
Berlin, NJ	5
Chicago, IL	2
Marlton, NJ	3
New Brunswick, NJ	120
Online – Survey Monkey	17
Parlin, NJ	1
Pennsauken, NJ	1
Philadelphia, PA	5
Staten Island, NY	12
Voorhees, NJ	10
TOTAL	176

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SUMMARY

Highly experienced professional with extensive and progressive experience in educational/counseling organizations, and diverse business environments. Effective communicator with strong counseling, teaching and supervisory skills developed through direction, management and administration of high quality educational and career programs.

EDUCATION:

- ◆ Ph.D. Candidate, Childhood Studies, Rutgers University, Camden NJ; 3.9 GPA; 2007-Present;
 Expected graduation, May 2017.
 Dissertation in process: *Confluence of Influence: Indian-American Youths' Perception, Negotiation and Transformation of Arranged Marriage Traditions in Modern American Society*.
 Expected completion, March 2017.
- ◆ M.S., Education/Health; Distinctive honors, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia, PA, 1980
- ◆ B.A., Special Education/Music; Dean's honor list, LaSalle University, Philadelphia, PA, 1977

RESEARCH INTERESTS:

Marriage and Family, Comparative Youth Studies, Emotional Expression, Indian and Indian-American Family Life; Counseling with Children and Multi-Cultural Populations.

ACADEMIC AWARDS:

- ◆ Rutgers University, Marsh-Gillette Fellowship Award, \$750, 2012-2013.
- ◆ Rowan University, Outstanding Supervisor Award for School Counseling, 2013.
- ◆ Rutgers University, Department of Childhood Studies, Graduate Fellowship Award, \$480, 2010.
- ◆ Rutgers University, Graduate Student Research Travel Award, \$500, 2008. Project: *Understanding Perceptions of Emotional Health in Children in Southern India*.
- ◆ Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program Award, U.S. Department of Education, Division of International Education, 1983-1984.

PUBLICATIONS:

- ◆ Marano, Diane, **Dianne Fabii**, and Daniel Hart. "What's Right in Moral Psychology?" *PsycCritiques*, 53.46 (2008): n.pag. Print.
- ◆ **Fabii, Dianne**. "Emotion Work." *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Eds. George Ritzer and J. Michael Ryan. Blackwell, 2011. 183. Print.

CHILDREN'S BOOK MANUSCRIPTS IN PROCESS:

- ◆ Fabii, Dianne. *I Can Stop Crying!*
- ◆ Fabii, Dianne. *How I Feel My Feelings*

RELEVANT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Evesham Township Board of Education Marlton, NJ

- ◆ *2013-14*: Served as lead committee member to research, design and implement district wide survey on school climate, completed by students in grades 3 through 8.
- ◆ *2011*: Served as lead committee member to research, revise and rewrite School Counseling Curriculum Manual.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS:

- ◆ Rutgers University, Department of Criminal Justice, Camden, NJ: *Children and Trauma, Coping and Resilience*, November 2014.
- ◆ St. Antony's College of Education, Mannarpuram, Tamilnadu, India: *1) Social-Emotional Learning and the Responsive Classroom Model; 2) Career Development and the Teaching Profession*, August 2013.
- ◆ St. Peter's College of Education, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India: *Teacher Training Requirements in the USA*, August 2013.
- ◆ Infant Jesus Higher Matriculation School, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India: *Indian-American Youth and Arranged Marriage*, August 2013.
- ◆ Parivar International Regional Training Meeting, Philadelphia, PA: *Introduction to Counseling Skills for Lay Ministers*, March 2013.
- ◆ Rutgers University, Department of Anthropology, Camden, NJ: *Arranged Marriage Among Youth in Rural India*, October 2009.
- ◆ Fordham University, Department of Anthropology, Bronx, NY: *Arranged Marriage Practices in India*, July 2009.
- ◆ Evesham Township Board of Education Professional Development Seminar for Teachers, Marlton, NJ: *ADD and ADHD: From Distraction to Proaction*, January, 2006.

Also have presented numerous workshops and talks in community on topics of stress management, care-giving, grief, bereavement, trauma, crisis response, and career development, 1985 to present.

CERTIFICATIONS AND LICENSES:

National Certified Counselor; National Certified Career Counselor; Master Career Counselor; Licensed Professional Counselor, NJ; NJ Student Personnel Services; NJ and PA Teacher of the Handicapped.

CURRENT PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Member of: American Counseling Association; Lee County School Counselors' Associations; National Board of Certified Counselors; National Career Development Association.

VOLUNTEER, COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL SERVICE:

- ◆ President, *The Rose Foundation for Children*: Created and direct organization serving needy children locally and globally. Write grants, solicit donations and provide aid to programs and individuals in tri-state area and in southern India. Travel extensively in south India to assess needs and provide funding consultation.

Grants: These grants were written for and awarded to St. Joseph's Charity Institute in southern India:

The Koch Foundation: 2003--\$10,000; 2006--\$10,000

The Raskob Foundation: 2005--\$3000

The Butler Foundation: 2002--\$3000; 2005--\$3000

Human Life International: 2000--\$10,000; 2001--\$12,500; 2002--\$2500

Fundraising: \$65,000 between 2001-2006 for St. Joseph's Charity Institute through public speaking presentations at parish masses and functions.

Grants provided through *The Rose Foundation for Children*: Raised \$5500 in grant funds and distributed to local students in Philadelphia and south Jersey, and students in southern India between 2009-2014.

- ◆ St. Joan of Arc Parish, Marlton, NJ: Committee Member, JACID (St. Joan of Arc Centre for Integral Development - India ministry); Raised \$11,500 in 2014 through public speaking presentations at parish. Also served as Eucharistic Minister.

PROFESSIONAL FULL TIME COUNSELING, TEACHING AND ADMINISTARTIVE EXPERIENCE

Lee County School District

Fort Myers, FL

Counselor

2015-Present

Manage all aspects of admissions processes in career focused programs at Fort Myers Technical College. Coordinate career services, lead Future Makers project and co-chair program committee for re-accreditation.

Evesham Township Board of Education

Marlton, NJ

School Counselor

2002-2015

Direct and manage all components of school counseling curriculum for DeMasi Elementary, a K-5 school, with enrollment of 350 students, including regular education, special needs and ELL students. Supervise, coach and mentor counseling interns.

The International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans

Brookfield, WI

Regional Director

1991-2002

Directed and managed recruitment, interviewing, placement, supervisory and training components of INTERNS Program in the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States.

Peirce College

Philadelphia, PA

Held progressive positions in continuing education and career development.

1985-1991

Director, Career Development Services, 1988-1991

Director, Cooperative Education, 1986-1988

Assistant Director, Continuing Education, 1985-1986

Lonsdale School

Stevenage, Hertfordshire, England

Exchange Teacher and Consultant

1983-1984

Supervised programs and taught lessons for primary level students with special needs through Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program.

Widener Memorial School

Philadelphia, PA

Teacher and Consultant for Special Needs Students

1977-1983

Developed and implemented educational programs; coordinated assessments; supervised student teachers.

PROFESSIONAL PART-TIME COUNSELING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Career and Lifeskills Management (C.A.L.M.)

Marlton, NJ

Private Therapist

2006-2014

Owned and operated private therapeutic practice, providing mental health and career counseling services to diverse clientele of adults and children with multiple and complex issues.

Lenape Adult High School

Marlton, NJ

Guidance Counselor

2002-2006

Counseled students on academic and career issues, and maintained academic records in program serving approximately 100 adult and at risk students, with multiple and diverse needs.

Dianne Fabii CV**Page 4****Lee Hecht Harrison**

Philadelphia, PA

Consultant

2002-2004

Presented career transition workshops and provided individual career counseling to diverse clients.

Counseling Centers of Delaware Valley

Marlton, NJ

Staff Therapist

2001-2005

Provided counseling services to individual clients. Attended supervision meetings and conferences.

Temple University

Philadelphia, PA

Consultant and Instructor

2001-2011

Presented workshops and seminars on career development topics; conducted mock interviews and provided individual counseling on career related issues to students in the Fox School of Business.