Chapter 3
Using an Ecological Framework to Contextualize the Bicultural Experiences and Identity of Asian Indian Immigrant Mothers and Their Children

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Research examining the experiences of immigrant families has great importance in our globalizing world. In the United States alone, over 40 million (13.3%) of the population is foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Immigrants born in India form the second largest Asian immigrant population in the United States (after China), and represent an estimated 2.2 million (5.5%) of the foreign-born population (Zong & Batalova, 2016). In psychological research, however, immigrants from India and Asian Indian Americans have received limited attention. As per a recent review, only 15% of articles focusing on Asian American samples published in the year 2015 specifically discussed Asian Indian Americans (Kiang, Cheah, Huynh, Wang, & Yoshikawa, 2016). Immigrants from India share broader cultural worldviews with their counterparts from East Asia, though the diversity of religions, languages, regional identities, and lifestyles make Indians a distinct group with their unique set of experiences. In this chapter, we first provide an overview of immigration patterns of Asian Indians in the United States and their demographics and then describe their acculturation experiences and cultural identity in the context of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems model.

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Patterns of Immigration and Demographics of Asian Indians in the United States

Immigrants from India arrived in the United States in several large waves, the largest of which took place between 1995 and 2015 (Chakravorty, Kapur, & Singh, 2016). Immigrants forming this wave were primarily professionals with specialized skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as well as information technology fields. As a group, these individuals were distinct from the general Indian population in several important regards, including family background, education, and religion.

These recent immigrants (as well as most Indians who migrated to the United States post-1965) came from families in India with higher social standing and income, which facilitated access to higher education and experiences that qualified them for admission to the United States as highly skilled migrants (Chakravorty et al., 2016). Approximately, 70% of Asian Indian immigrants and their families in the United States have college degrees, which is more than double the national average in India and the United States (UNESCO, undated; Pew Research Center, 2013).

India is a diverse country with significant variation in culture, religion, and language across the nation (Chhokar, 2008). There are 22 official native languages in India, and the most widely spoken languages include Hindi, Bengali, and Marathi (Census India, 2011). Almost all Asian Indian immigrants living in the United States speak an Indian language in the home (e.g., 25% speak Hindi, 13% speak Telugu, and 12% speak Gujarati), and about 1 in 10 speak English exclusively (Zong & Batalova, 2017). With regard to religion, close to 80% of Indians in India identify as Hindu, which is higher than the rate of 51% among Asian Indian immigrants in the United States (Census India, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2012). Many more Asian Indian immigrants identify as Christian (18% vs. 2% in India) and the rate of Indians identifying as Muslim is similar (13% in India vs. 10% in the United States) (Census India, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2012). Differences aside, religion and spirituality remain important in the lives of Indians living abroad (Baptiste, 2005; Fishman, Raval, Daga, & Raj, 2014).

Acculturation and Identity Development in the Context of Ecological Systems Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems model is useful in understanding and conceptualizing the experiences of immigrants, and their families as factors salient to their experiences are reflected in the various systems. In this model, culture lies at the foundation, and is part of an all-encompassing system that influences (and is influenced by) the individual (and family; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Additionally, children of immigrants "deal on a daily basis with contrasting and often conflicting attitudes, values, and expectations derived from dual frames of reference, their home or ethnic culture, and the larger society as embodied in the school and among their peers" (Phinney, 2010, p. 34). Thus, their experiences within and between different levels of systems may be incongruous.

Within this broader ecological systems framework, acculturation theories can be used for conceptualizing and classifying the process in which immigrants associate with their new society and changes they may experience in their cultural identity. Berry's (1993) four acculturation style typologies are commonly cited in studies examining immigrant acculturation and cultural identity. Each style represents different degrees in which immigrants maintain or reject their natal culture, and/or accept or reject aspects of the new society they live in. Immigrants may assimilate (i.e., assume the cultural identity of the host society and lose aspects of the natal culture), marginalize (i.e., not identify with either the natal or host society), separate (i.e., reject the new culture and solely identify with the natal culture), or integrate (i.e., maintain aspects of the natal culture while also identifying with aspects of the new culture; Berry, 1993). While these styles are widely used in describing immigrant acculturation, there have been criticisms of the psychometric background of these typologies, and qualitative approaches have been recommended to explore acculturation experiences and perspectives (Rudmin, 2003).

Models of acculturation generally relate to immigrants who arrive in a new society with a developed natal cultural identity. Children of minority immigrants experience a different process of cultural identity development, as their cultural experiences are shaped in the context of being a minority within a majority population. The construct of biculturalism, or bicultural identity, is based on research on the integrated acculturation style and refers to the ability to have a strong identification with two cultures. A related construct, bicultural competence is the ability to switch between different cultural models depending on the social milieu. Biculturalism and bicultural competence is particularly salient to Asian Indian immigrants living in Western societies such as the United States and Canada, as on average, Asian Indian immigrants and their children adopt a bicultural style of acculturation more often than other styles (Aycan & Kanungo, 1998; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002a; Krishnan & Berry, 1992). According to Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002), bicultural individuals can perceive their dual cultural identities as being compatible with each other, or as contradictory. Both biculturalism and bicultural competence are advantageous to children of immigrants and there is evidence that these qualities promote psychological health and well-being (Farver et al., 2002a; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). For example, adolescent children of Asian Indian immigrants in the United States with a bicultural identity had higher academic achievement and greater self-perceptions of worth, academic ability, and social competence, than those with other acculturation styles/cultural identities (Farver et al., 2002b).

Parents and Children's Cultural Identity in Asian Indian Immigrant Families

Immigrants may face numerous challenges as they settle in a new country, particularly when there are large sociocultural differences between their natal and new society. Cultural discrepancies can be accentuated when immigrants start families,

as parents are faced with the challenge of raising children in an unfamiliar sociocultural context (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000). This may be particularly salient for Asian Indian immigrants, given the contrasting cultural norms and expectations of Indian and American society, as well as differing value systems (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). For example, among middle-class families, Indian mothers in India are more likely to emphasize relational socialization goals (e.g., encouraging children to be respectful and adaptable; Raval, Raval, & Deo, 2014), while Caucasian American parents emphasize autonomous socialization goals (e.g., encouraging their children to be independent and unique; Chao, 2000).

Among children of immigrants, parents and extended family members provide primary socialization of cultural practices of the natal culture, while the school and peers are often a major source of socialization to the host (American) culture (Padilla, 2006). According to Hughes et al. (2006), minority and immigrant parents engage in a number of strategies to socialize their children to their ethnic-racial identity. Early practices with young children include *cultural socialization*, which refer to parenting behaviors that "teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history; that promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children's cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly" (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 749). As children grow older, parents may begin to engage in other more complex socialization practices such as preparation for bias or discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006).

Studies with Asian Indian immigrant families living in Western societies (i.e., Canada, the United States, and Western Europe) have shown that for the most part, Asian Indian parents systematically retain aspects of Indian parenting norms and attitudes, while also adapting aspects of more general Western parenting (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002; Raghavan, Harkness, & Super, 2010). In addition, Asian Indian immigrant parents adapt their parenting to help their children function effectively at home and within the broader Western cultural context. For example, in a qualitative study with Asian Indian immigrant parents in the United States, fathers shared that parenting based solely on Asian Indian values and customs would not be helpful to their children and thus incorporated aspects of mainstream American parenting (Inman et al., 2007). Mothers reported speaking to their children in English outside the home and emphasizing a combination of American and Indian characteristics (e.g., being open minded yet also respectful of elders). In essence, Asian Indian immigrant parents were cognizant of differing expectations within their child's ecological system and made thoughtful choices in their parenting to help their child function adaptively in these different systems (Inman et al., 2007).

At the family level, research with diverse samples of Asian immigrant families has found that varying patterns of acculturation or cultural identity between parent and child influence child/adolescent outcomes. For example, among Asian Indian immigrant families in the United States, parent-child dyads who shared similar acculturation patterns or cultural identity reported fewer and less intense conflicts compared to non-matched dyads (Farver et al., 2002a). Similar findings have been reported among other Asian immigrant populations. For example, greater discrep-

ancies in Asian values were associated with increased conflict among Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrants and their children in the United States (Choi, He, & Harachi, 2008), as well as Chinese and Korean American college students and their parents (Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008).

Present Study

An important developmental task for children of immigrants is to function competently in different cultural systems (Mistry & Wu, 2010). A body of literature has demonstrated that having a bicultural identity or bicultural competence is related to psychological health and well-being of immigrant children (Farver et al., 2002a; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). However, few studies examine the experience of cultural identity and how living at the intersection of two cultures impacts identity development among Asian Indian immigrant parents and their children. This study examined cultural identity among Asian Indian immigrant mothers living in Midwestern United States and their school-age children, focusing on the proximal systems in which Asian Indian immigrants and their children function. We used qualitative methods to explicitly identify salient aspects of immigrant child development, as well as provide context to development (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 10 Asian Indian immigrant mothers (aged 37–48 years; M = 41.4 years, SD = 4.7) and their second-generation children (aged 9–15 years; M = 11.4 years, SD = 2.3; 5 males). Nine of the children were born in the United States, and one child moved to the United States at the age of 1 year. Six children had either one older or one younger sibling, and four children had no siblings. Four children attended schools with a predominantly Caucasian student body and were one of handful of students of Indian descent, while four others attended schools with a more diverse student body including a number of other Asian Indian children (school composition of two participants was not known). Eight children reported visiting India every 1–3 years, and two did not visit India as frequently.

All mothers migrated to the United States as adults and had completed at least an undergraduate college degree. Mothers migrated to the United States between 1993 and 2004, had lived in the United States between 10 and 24 years (M = 16.1 years, SD = 4.7), and all expected to remain in the United States indefinitely. All were married to Asian Indian immigrant men who had also moved to the United States as adults. Most mothers reported moving due to their husbands' employment (n = 7),

and some moved for post-graduate studies and subsequently remained in the United States (n = 3). All families lived in nuclear homes (i.e., parents and children only), though about half of the mothers reported that their parents (i.e., the children's grandparents) would regularly visit from India and stay a few months during each visit. Annual family income for each family was over $55,000 (median household income in the United States is $55,516; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). All participants identified as Hindu.

Procedure

Mothers and their school-age children were recruited through flyers and sign-up sheets distributed at Asian Indian social gatherings (e.g., picnic, cultural performances, etc.) and through "word of mouth" referrals from other participants. Mothers who were interested in participating contacted the researcher and were provided further details about the study. In-home interviews were then scheduled. During these home visits, the researcher first described the study to both mothers and their school-age child, and then obtained written informed consent from mothers and verbal assent from children. Mothers and children were interviewed separately. The researcher who conducted all interviews was of Asian Indian descent. All interviews were conducted in English, and were digitally audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

Measures

Semi-structured interview protocols were developed for mothers and their children. Each protocol was developed by the researchers based on an iterative literature review of research with Asian Indian families, and in consultation with a research team that has substantial experience with both qualitative research methods and research with Asian Indian families.

The protocol for mothers included questions regarding mothers' own cultural identity and their perceptions of their child's cultural identity (e.g., Tell me about your cultural identity [if additional probes were needed – do you feel you are more Indian, more American, or a little bit of both]; In what aspects of your life are you more Indian [or American]? Tell me about your child's cultural identity? In what aspects of their life are they more Indian [or American]?).

The protocol for school-age children included open-ended prompts for children to describe their cultural identity using their own words (e.g., Tell me about who you are? Do you feel you are more Indian, more American, or a bit of both? In what aspects of your life are you more Indian [or American]?).

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used in this study as it enables a deep and rich understanding of phenomena being explored (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Moreover, consistent with the aims of this study, the qualitative content analysis approach is suited to studies that seek to describe phenomena (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and it is widely used in social science research (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Analyses began with the researchers gaining a sense of the big picture of the data through listening and reading interview transcripts multiple times. Once the researchers were immersed in the data, emerging codes were extracted. These codes were then labelled using participants' own words, where possible (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As more codes were identified, they were grouped into meaningful clusters (Patton, 2002), which were presented to a larger team with substantial research experience with both Asian Indian immigrants and qualitative research methods. Feedback from the research team was incorporated to refine codes and clusters.

Efforts were made to enhance trustworthiness of findings, including regular "on the spot" member checks (i.e., clarifying what participants said) during interviews. In addition, data analysis was conducted under scrutiny and advisement of a larger team of researchers which helped enhance objectivity and minimize researcher bias. The larger team also served an auditing function and provided a fresh perspective on the data and themes that emerged. Finally, efforts were made to recruit Asian Indian immigrant families who were representative of most other Indian families in the area.

Results

The results section begins with a description of the microsystem as described by mothers and their children. Next, themes that emerged regarding cultural identity are presented as well as illustrative narratives (please note that all names are pseudonyms).

Descriptions of the Microsystem

All mothers described raising their children in an Indian home that was distinctly separate from other systems outside the home. Within the home, most families spoke an Indian language (e.g., Hindi and Tamil), all ate Indian food, and most practiced Hindu prayers and traditions. These themes are illustrated in the excerpts below:

> In our family we have a rule that when you are inside the house, we eat Indian food, we talk in our language; there are 7 or 8 hours in school you can speak the language [English], but we always try to have the culture of back in India here in our house so that they [children] don't miss anything (Mrs. Soman).

Similarly, Mrs. Indra said, "How we raise children that focus on studies and how we keep home, how we cook, and how we want to keep our houses. In all that we are very Indian." Mrs. Eshwan said that, "School is different and home is different," and Mrs. Nanda described that, "The environment inside the house is Indian", and went on to acknowledge that her child's experiences and expectations outside the home were different.

Mothers spoke about maintaining traditions in the home so that their children maintained a connection with India. For example:

> Even though I am not very ritualistic or religious, I try to keep the traditional aspects of it alive for him. It probably happens in every culture. What my grandma did, my mom probably did a little percentage of that; and if I was in India, I would follow a larger percentage. Being here it is even less than that, it is diluted. And I know for him growing up here it will go down even less. Who knows as an adult with a family of his own what he will do, but at least I give him certain important things he can carry on with his life (Mrs. Menon).

In addition to maintaining an Indian home, most mothers encouraged their children to participate in Indian cultural activities such as Indian language classes, as well as dance and music classes.

All mothers reported that they placed high value on their child's academic achievement, and many felt that this was a quality that differentiated their child's experiences in the home from systems outside the home (e.g., school, the child's non-Indian peers' homes, etc.). When mothers were asked why they emphasized academic achievement, some mothers talked about academic attainment being a means to a "good life", that academic achievement was tied to family pride and a yardstick of success, and that it was a way for children to follow their parent's own success. For example, "It's just because that's how I think…we started to move up financially from what we were before and, that's the only way [education] that our lifestyles has changed so, that's the only successes that we see" (Mrs. Indra). Mrs. Nanda explained:

> Because India is very competitive, like when we grew up there were not so many jobs, so we always had this in mind. We were always told, "If you're not good in studies then you will not get a good job, you will not have a good life."

Similarly, Mrs. Menon said:

> As South Asian Indian parents, we tend to put so much more emphasis on education and we want our kids to follow our footsteps. Like both my husband and myself are PhDs and we are like, "You [son] should be well educated and you should focus on this"… I think it is to be well placed in life so you have a good career, you can earn well and provide for your family. But, it is also a measure of your own self-worth and what you can achieve in life. I am not saying that career is the only way to achieve it but even for people who don't have a traditional career they would still emphasize education. I think it's just part of our culture to do that.

Mrs. Indra described education as something to fall back in hard times:

> Should something bad happen, you know happen to your husband or you have family around you, I think they're able to support themselves and sustain themselves. And I think that is why it's so important once you have that [education], whether you chose it, she [daughter] could be a homemaker when she grows up, it doesn't matter, but if she has it [education], there's always that to fall back on.

School-age children reported that their experiences in the home were different from that of their peers in several regards. These included celebrating Indian and Hindu traditions, as well as their parents being more "protective" and having greater restrictions on their activities relative to their non-Indian peers. In describing their home, a few children specifically talked about being more American than their parents, and having to occasionally teach or explain "American things" to their parents. Chandra (male, 14 years) said that his parents were, "not used to some American people" (and customs) and wished his parents were "a little more familiar" with American customs. Nidhi (female, 9 years) said that her parents, "really don't know much about America. They know a lot, but not like my friends would know, because they are exactly American. So I can just ask them [friends] questions about America." Eshwar (male, 15 years) shared:

> I guess I would hope that they [parents] had a better understanding of American culture. That's just something that comes with being a second-generation kid. That's the big one, understanding of the culture here and understanding what goes on here. Because they didn't grow up here, so it's hard for me to tell them like, "Oh, I'm going to this," when they just didn't have those things so it's hard to explain it to them… The uncomfortable comes when it's something that they don't know about. Like to give you an example, the dances they have here like Prom, Homecoming, and Winter Formal. It's not uncomfortable, but I just have to explain everything to them and they don't understand sometimes because they didn't have them there [in India].

Consistent with their mothers' descriptions, many children described their parents as being more focused on education than their non-Indian peers' parents. The following excerpts describe children's perceptions of their parent's emphasis on education. Deva (male, 14 years) said, "Well the differences are, some of my white friends, their parents really don't care what their grades are as long as they're passing. My parents are more like, 'That needs to be an A' and stuff. They are more focused on that," and Jeyamani (female, 11 years) shared, "They are probably different like education wise, like your average Indian parent focuses a lot on studies."

When asked why their parents focused on education, children said it was because their parents wanted them to "grow up so you can have a good job and live a good life" (Jeyamani; female, 11 years). Nidhi (female, 9 years) said, "They say study hard or you won't get a good job, and you won't be a doctor, because doctors make lots of money… and you can live a good life..." Deva (male, 14 years) said, "It's how they were brought up, I suppose. Like they were brought up that this grade is not acceptable and stuff." Similarly Nidhi (female, 9 years) said it was because her parents grew up in India and the "competition is crazy" in India and one needed an education to move forward.

In addition to maintaining an Indian home and emphasizing academic achievement, most mothers commented on engaging in "flexible parenting" within the home to help their child "fit it." For example, a couple mothers spoke about giving their children the choice of eating beef outside the home, even though they themselves did not eat beef. Other mothers mentioned "not wanting to deprive" their children of what their peers were doing. For example, "I would encourage her Indian culture, but at the same time, I'll make sure that she enjoys the same level of freedom or whatever decision-making her other friends would have, so she doesn't differentiate herself from others" (Mrs. Jeya). Mrs. Jeya also talked about giving her child "more freedom in discussion, and probably, freedom not just in terms of speaking, but if she wants to pick up like a different line [job]." She also said, "In India, parents are more focused on education so they would force their children to do engineering or medicine. I am not saying that is wrong, but here if she wants to take arts or something, I will let her do it."

While most mothers did not report restricting their child's activities outside the home, two mothers of young girls reported restrictions on their daughters' social activities, such as not being allowed to have sleepovers or play at friends' houses. When asked why they had these restrictions, one mother spoke about wanting her child to "be in our culture" and another said, "I don't know, for safety maybe."

Some children described their parents as more protective and "strict" than their non-Indian friends parents ($n = 4$), though a couple children felt their parents were less strict than their friends parents. With regard to being more strict and protective, Kanmani (female, age 11 years) described this saying:

> I would say that my parents are a bit more protective than my friends' parents. My parents won't let me have sleep-overs, they make me stay at home. I think it's because they want to make sure that they know what is better for me instead of exposing me to the bad things from the outside world.

Cultural Identity Narratives

Asian Indian Immigrant Mothers Interviews with mothers resulted in three themes for personal cultural identity and two themes for mothers' reports of their children's cultural identity.

Theme One: Remaining Indian while Becoming a Little American Most mothers ($n = 6$) reported retaining an Indian identity, while also taking on some qualities they associated with an American cultural identity. These American qualities were predominantly described in how mothers thought about themselves and others, and how they raised their children. For example, Mrs. Anandan said, "You can never take the Indian out of me but with all my progressive thought, I would say I am more American than Indian… I am more open-minded so in that way I think I am more American." Mrs. Indra said, "I'm a little bit of both because at this point I don't think I'm completely Indian. My outlook and my perceptions have changed."

Other mothers talked about becoming more American over time and exposure to American society. For example, Mrs. Menon shared:

> Definitely now a little bit of both. It's been 24 years… even though I keep saying I want to go back [to India], my sister keeps warning me that I won't fit there because like I said, I am definitely more American than I was even 10 years ago. But I still retain my Indian-ness.

Mrs. Jeya expressed a similar experience saying, "I would say bit of both Indian and American. I have changed – not changed, but I have picked up things which I like here, but at the same time retained some of my cultural values."

Theme Two: Remaining a "Full Indian" Other mothers ($n = 4$) reported retaining an almost exclusively Indian identity in all realms of their lives. For example, Mrs. Eshwan said:

> I never think of myself as an American. But when political issues arose… at that time I felt like I needed to change my citizenship because it is the time to speak up. So I became a citizen. But I feel if you call me as an Indian-American citizen, I don't feel like an American citizen.

Similarly, Mrs. Nanda said, "I feel like I'm more Indian… I socialize more with Indian people, our food habit is more Indian … Culturally, we hardly watch American sports or television, other than the news."

Mothers' Descriptions of the School-Aged Child's Identity

Theme one: Primarily American with "Indian roots" When considering their child's identity, three mothers expressed their belief that they were raising American children, or, at the very least, children whose identities were predominantly "Western" or "American" with some Indian qualities. For example, Mrs. Anandan said:

> He is fully American. He definitely tells out loud what he feels. When I was young I didn't have the capability to talk about what I thought. He does that; he defies authority. He respects us, but he's not afraid of authority.

Among these mothers, two had the belief that their child may embrace a more Indian identity as they grow up, as these mothers had observed in older Asian Indian American children in their social circle. For example, Mrs. Nanda said:

> It's from my experiences what I have seen here is that when the kids go to college, they try to avoid Indian ties for a couple of years. But they come back. I've seen them at Indian parties. So it's kind of a struggle, growing up they try to identify themselves more as American than Indian.

In another example, Mrs. Chandran said:

> He is more Westernized now, but in the future hopefully he will understand. I know my older daughter now is showing a lot of the [Indian] culture she learned a lot from the other [college] friends. Probably my son will be like that too.

Theme Two: "Bit of Both" The remaining mothers felt that their child's identity was a blend of both Indian and American values and culture. For example:

> I would say Indian-American. Indian because the culture in his family, the way we are bringing him up is Indian, talking everyday with his family, the food, even the way he sees his parents at home is Indian… He has a very large number of friends, who are a majority are 99% American. So he is mingling with them like who they are. But I don't think it is kind of difficult for him to mix with them, even keeping his own identity (Mrs. Soman).
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> Bit of both. She's Indian in the sense she knows what is expected out of her, her studies…So that's the way she's Indian… and I believe that we inculcate strong family values in her, those are the ways that she's Indian. I think the way she likes to dress is very American and her outlook on things [is more American] (Mrs. Indra).

School-Age children Interviews with school-age children resulted in just one theme for cultural identity.

Theme: "Both Indian and American" All children described themselves as having a bicultural identity. Most children ($n = 8$) described themselves as being equally Indian and American, and two children described themselves as mainly American with some Indian qualities. In talking about their identity, most children reported feeling more or less Indian or American depending on the situation or setting. For example, Eshwar (male, 15 years) said:

> Definitely depends. Some days I feel American, some days I feel Indian. The weekend of our religious festival, I'm with my Indian friends and family comes in, that's when I feel 100% Indian. In school, talking about the NFL and things like that, I feel American. So definitely a mix of both. But when it comes to spirituality and religion and everything, I definitely feel Indian.

Similarly, Nidhi (female, 9 years) said, "When I am with my Indian friends I feel Indian, and when I am with my American friends I feel American. It's really cool to be both Indian and American, two different cultures." Ananda (male, 9 years) described himself as mainly American, saying:

> I feel mostly American, like 80% and like 20% Indian. I'm American because I have pretty much all the characteristics of an American… they all like football and I like football a lot too. [Interviewer: What about 20% Indian?] Well, I am associated with Diwali and I really like Diwali because it really looks nice in the night and we celebrate the birthday of gods and I am really curious about that usually.

Discussion

The overarching aim of this study was to examine narratives of cultural identity and experiences among Asian Indian immigrant mothers and their young children in the United States, and contextualize these narratives within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). We begin this section by discussing the microsystem of the home, followed by cul-

tural identity narratives of mothers and their children, as well as unique findings that emerged. Limitations and avenues for future research are then presented.

Mothers in this study described a number of ways in which they engaged in *cultural socialization* (i.e., socializing their children to the cultural practices and norms of their Indian heritage; Hughes et al., 2006). This was apparent in their descriptions of the microsystem where mothers described speaking an Indian language, celebrating Indian cultural holidays, eating Indian food, as well as emphasizing other qualities they attributed to an Indian identity such as emphasis on education. Other facets of ethnic-racial socialization identified in the literature such as *preparation for bias* (i.e., preparing children for discrimination) or *promotion of mistrust* were not described by these mothers, though have been reported in studies with older adolescent and young adult children of Asian Indian immigrants (see Daga & Raval, 2018).

Emphasis on education and academic achievement was mentioned by all mothers and children in this study. Many children described their parents as being more focused on education relative to their non-Indian friends' parents, and believed this was because their parents wanted them to be successful and "have a good life." In India, education is seen as a "gateway" to improving one's station in life and also a source of pride to family. Education in the context of Indian parenting is a mix of individualism and collectivism, in that Indian families maintain collectivist values, yet when it comes to education, competition is encouraged and families value status that comes with having a child who excels academically (Kumar & Maehr, 2007). In the present sample, mothers described their focus on education as being motivated by their own successes and wanting the same for their child, as well as viewing education as a means for their child to have a happy and financially secure future.

With regard to identity, all mothers reported retaining a strong Indian cultural identity, and more than half described the experience of retaining this identity while simultaneously developing characteristics they labelled as more "American." In reflecting on their child's identity, most mothers considered their children an equal blend of Indian and American qualities, though a few mothers described their children as having a predominantly American identity. Some mothers spoke about expecting their child to take on more Indian qualities as they get older, based on experiences of their older children or their friends' children. This notion is consistent with Phinney's (1990, 1993) model of ethnic identity development, which posited that ethnic identity development takes place over developmental stages, with exploration beginning in adolescence and young adulthood that develops into a mature understanding and identification with aspects of the individual's ethnic identity.

With regard to parenting, most mothers talked about being flexible in their parenting and taking on aspects of American parenting. However, two mothers of girls reported restrictions on their daughters' social activities. Though a small sample, it is noteworthy that both of these mothers of girls in the present study reported self-identified as "full-Indian." The two mothers of boys who also reported a primarily Indian identity did not talk about being restrictive with their sons. Varghese and Jenkins (2009) reported that Indian immigrant parents may engage in more protective behaviors to limit their children's exposure to Western norms, and that this may

be more prevalent in the parenting of girls. This sex-specific parenting may reflect traditional gender roles in Indian society, where greater emphasis is placed on chastity and purity among females, and women are viewed as the agents through which Indian culture is passed on to the next generation (Dasgupta, 1998). It is important to note that children in this study were all under the age of 16 years, and studies with older adolescent samples have demonstrated that discrepant cultural values between parent and child can lead to conflict (Farver et al., 2002a). Children in this sample were not yet at the stage where negotiations for things like a driving license, picking a college, or dating were taking place (Phinney, 2010). Thus, it may be easier for these mothers of younger children to be more flexible in their parenting, as they and their children are not yet facing issues that other Asian Indian families have reported to be difficult to navigate, such as dating (Dasgupta, 1998). Relatedly, although all mothers in this study described cultural socialization with their sons and daughters, the literature suggests that the mother-daughter relationship may be a more central mode of cultural transmission in Asian Indian immigrant families (Kallivayalil, 2004).

Most children perceived themselves to have both Indian and American identities, and two children (one boy and one girl) described themselves as being primarily American, with some Indian qualities. Young children tend to think of cultural identity in more tangible or concrete terms (Phinney, 2010), and this was reflected in this study. For example, children focused on more tangible aspects of identity such as food, clothing, and activity preference, and not personal qualities that their mothers identified, such as challenging authority or speaking up. In addition, children talked about feeling more or less Indian depending on their social context and who they were with. The older boys in this sample identified more abstract aspects of their identity, such as differences in faith/religion and political views. For most of the sample, however (children under 12 years), these abstract concepts were not yet developmentally salient. These findings underscore the influence of cognitive maturation and socialization on how children make sense of their world and the systems within which they function.

A few children described being "more American" than their parents and needing to explain "American things," such as dances and sports, to them. Further research is recommended to examine whether children's perceptions of their parents' lack of understanding of American culture may be a precursor to parent-adolescent conflict seen in families where parents and children report differing levels of acculturation and identification with the host culture.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current findings need to be considered in light of some limitations. First, the small sample size is adequate for exploratory qualitative studies such as this, though larger samples are needed to increase generalizability and robustness of results. Second, the current sample was recruited from Midwestern United States, and future studies may examine the impact of community context by incorporating

Asian Indian samples from across United States including regions that are particularly densely populated with Asian Indian immigrants such as the West coast (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Third, the parent sample was limited to mothers, and although mothers are the primary caregivers in many Asian Indian families (Jambunathan et al., 2000), the lack of father perspectives is a limitation. Finally, while the sample was representative of the general Asian Indian immigrant population with regard to family income and caregiver education, the sample is not representative of other Asian Indian immigrant families who fall outside of this demographic, including the 7% who live in poverty (Zong & Batalova, 2017).

Despite limitations, this study adds to the literature by providing parent and child descriptions of the proximal systems in which Asian Indian immigrant families operate. The child narratives are particularly important as "the understandings that children have of their environment" is as critical (if not more so) than objective descriptions of the setting itself (Phinney, 2010; p. 35) and Asian Indian children's perspectives have been largely absent from the literature.

Findings from this study suggest a number of areas warranting further research attention, and the influence of parent acculturation on child experiences and functioning needs to be further explicated. Longitudinal studies examining Asian Indian children's developmental trajectories are also recommended to examine how experiences at the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's systems influence identity development and psychological functioning. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine how socialization behaviors of Asian Indian immigrant mothers evolve over time and the impact this has on child functioning. These studies would help determine the best junctures and avenues to support optimal functioning of Asian Indian immigrant parents and children in the United States.

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