

Copyright
by
Mamta Motwani Accapadi
2005

The Dissertation Committee for Mamta Motwani Accapadi Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

**Affirmations of Identity:
The Story of a South Asian American Sorority**

Committee:

William Moore, Supervisor

Martha N. Ovando

Edwin R. Sharpe

Sharmila Rudrappa

Vagdevi Meunier

**Affirmations of Identity:
The Story of a South Asian American Sorority**

by

Mamta Motwani Accapadi, B.A.; M.Ed.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

**The University of Texas at Austin
May 2005**

Dedication

To the Sisters of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Inc.

Thank you for sharing your world with me. You changed me for the better, and you made me proud of our shared identity in a way that I never knew was possible.

Bharti Motwani

Mom,

*From you, I have learned more than any classroom, lecture, or life experience.
Your love, your wisdom, and your prayers have carried me to this point.
Your sacrifices, known and unknown, are the foundation of my existence.*

Gul Motwani

Dad,

*Your patience, your optimism, and your life stories
have shaped my spirit.
You are the music in my heart.*

Amit Motwani

My Dear Brother,

*Your unspoken love and support is felt loudly
You let “me” be “me” without judgment
Your faith is the source of my strength.*

Jay Motwani

My Dear Brother,

*Your honesty and genuine support
Navigated me through this journey.
Thank you for always being real, in a world of illusions and uncertainties.*

Jos Manuel Accapadi

My Dear Husband and Soulmate,

*You saw rainbows on the horizon when I saw only rain.
You taught me to dance to the rhythm of my heart-
The rhythm-
Shared between us for generations past and generations to come.*

Acknowledgements

Before beginning work on this dissertation, I never stopped to think about the source of my passion, strength, and conviction. It seems like poetic irony, given the topic of this dissertation, that the answer has been before my eyes, and in my soul, even before I knew that I would even write a dissertation. I must acknowledge the many South Asian women who have come before me, and their untold stories that live through me.

I remember summertime in India when I was a young girl, braiding my Amma's (great-grandmother's) hair on a hot, humid, summer day. While I sat with her complaining, she remained in peace- almost enjoying my sloppy tugging of her hair. That moment has stuck with me- her silence so powerful. While I never truly knew her, my mother told me many stories about how she kept my father's family together, and it was because of her strength that the entire family was as successful as we knew it to be.

When I was born, Bhabhi (my paternal grandmother) raised me for the first year and a half of my life. I was nourished by her love, her prayers, and her faith. My Nani (maternal grandmother) also spoiled me, and she made the best phulko's and chai, even before it became an American fad. Both of them exuded love in a way that I will never forget.

My mother was my first role model. Before there were any leadership opportunities, there was home. My mother taught me the delicate balance of humility, assertiveness, and personal dignity. She also taught me the strength of the women before me, and the power of their faith and prayers.

In love, and in prayer, I first acknowledge the women in my family, who have fed into my spirit to make me the person I am today.

I met Dr. *Vagdevi Meunier* during my fourth year of college. Never did I expect that a woman this brilliant would be on my dissertation committee, much less a cherished friend, so many years later. Dr. Vagdevi Meunier introduced me to myself. She has been a guiding light throughout my life, as well as a living reminder to me of the ideal South Asian woman.

I could not have made it through this process without the encouragement and optimism of my committee. *Dr. Moore*, without you, I almost walked away. Thank you for listening, critiquing, and refueling my hope. *Dr. Ovando*, your dedication to students is unparalleled, and I am truly indebted to you for giving me the kickstart I needed to complete this degree. *Dr. Sharpe*, your optimism and caring spirit came at just the right time. I was lucky to work with you on a campus committee as a student, and doubly lucky to have that chance again with you on the dissertation committee. *Dr. Rudrappa*, you were my angel. You opened so many doors of thought to me, and challenged me in such powerful ways! Your late-night pep-talks will be in my fondest of memories.

I am also grateful for the support of various faculty members throughout my education journey. While you are not with us, you are certainly here in spirit, *Dr. Phelps*. You gave me a chance when I didn't give myself chances. I will not forget you. *Dr. Brown*, you supported me when I didn't even know where to begin with graduate school. Thank you for the confidence you had in me. *Dr. Scheurich*, you validated my anger. You listened to the silence. You took me under your wing. Honestly, your intervention was quite possibly the most important in my doctoral experience. By sharing the QSE family with me, you allowed me feel legitimate in a space where I felt inferior, insignificant, and invisible. Thank you for giving me wings!

Dear *QSE Family*- A safe space of critical inquiry and laughter at the same time, you taught me how to think, how to write, and the importance of “telling the story.” My QSE spin-off writing support team- *Barbara, Enrique, Bill, and Brendan*, many thanks for the discussions, suggestions, and space to discuss what nobody else understood.

Dear *MIC Family*, all of you were SO patient with me throughout this process. Your late night IM’s, and phone calls of encouragement kept me going at my weariest hour. *Mrs. Brenda Burt*, your strength and faith kept me solid and true to myself on this journey.

Shelah Crear- you brought me on this path! It is hard to believe that we started this together, and you taught me so much about how to advise students, and what a true educator truly does.

Kevin Curry- you taught me to believe in the greater good. Because of you, I am a better educator and a better person.

SJTI Family- I was forever changed when I joined this family. *Jamie, Vernon, Kathy*- thank you for waking me up! You cleaned the lens through which I see the world.

Greek Life and Education Staff- Thank you all for the journey, and for even letting me share in the experiences with all of you. You all are a great team, and if the rest only knew...

Ron Artis- I don't even know how we met, or how it ended up that you became a mentor for me through this process, but I am a believer in fate, now. I am so grateful for your guidance.

The Founders of Kappa Phi Gamma- Thank you for letting me share in your vision. Thank you for letting me be a part of the family. Thank you for bringing me some of the best memories ever! Bella Desai, a special thanks to you for believing in the possibilities of this dissertation.

Net-IP Family- As I think upon these years, I think about all of you. All of our adventures, all of our laughter, and all of our life-changing moments together. Thank you all for teaching me balance, and also how to embrace the joy in all of our life's moments. Without you all, I would have never left my apartment ever.

Jos- My dear, so the pendulum does swing- this time it was you motivating me to write. I have no more words to offer, that you already do not know.

**Affirmations of Identity:
The Story of a South Asian American Sorority**

Publication No. _____

Mamta Motwani Accapadi, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at Austin, 2005

Supervisor: William Moore

As universities strive to meet the needs of their continually diversifying constituencies, the issue of serving diverse populations has steadily been at the forefront of dialogue in higher education. The Asian American student population is one of the fastest growing populations within the arena of higher education, thus there is a critical need for student affairs practitioners to understand the complexities of the Asian American community (Hune, 2002). Minimal efforts are made by higher education researchers and practitioners on university campuses to explore the unique needs of Asian American students on predominantly White campuses.

Given the vast ethnic diversity of the Asian American community, it is important to study specific communities to understand the complexity of the Asian American community. This study focuses on a South Asian student organization. The main purpose of this ethnographic case study is to determine how involvement in a South Asian American sorority impacts the identity development of South Asian American collegiate women.

The research questions central to this inquiry were: 1) What factors motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority? 2) In what ways do joining a South Asian interest sorority impact the identity development of South Asian American women?

This study is a qualitative, ethnographic case study. Data for this study were drawn from in-depth interviews with South Asian American women college students who are members of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Inc., as well as from group observations, and focus group dialogue. Participants were recruited to participate in the study through an informational presentation and written request to the National Board of the sorority, and email request to the sorority members. Any student who fit the criteria of being a member of the sorority for at least one full year, and held a leadership position within the sorority was invited to participate in the interview process.

This study contributed to the literature focused on understanding the identity-relevant needs of Asian American students on predominantly White college campuses, with a specific focus on South Asian American women. “The ‘formal’ scholarship on the topic of South Asian and Asian American campus groups is scarce,” (Gupta, 1998, p 127) thus this study added to this body of research.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xv
List of Figures	xvi
Prologue	1
Chapter One: Introduction to the Study	9
Context of the Study	10
Consequences of an Untold History	11
Statement of the Problem.....	16
Research Questions	18
Definition of Terms.....	18
Significance of the Study.....	20
Methodology	21
Assumptions.....	22
Limitations and Scope.....	23
Summary	24
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature	27
An Introduction to Asian America.....	27
A Brief Historic Overview	28
Myths Associated with Asian Americans	30
Model Minority Myth	31
Perpetual Foreigner Myth	31
Cumulative Impact of these Myths	33
Questioning the Term: Asian America	35
South Asian America	36
Identity Development Theory	40
Ethnic Identity Development	41
Theory of Nigrescence	42
Ethnic Identity Development	43

People of Color Racial Identity Development	44
Asian American Identity Development Theory	45
Model of Acculturation: Sue & Sue.....	46
Asian American Identity Development Model: Jean Kim.....	46
Gaps in Identity Development Literature	49
Student Involvement	50
Theoretical Overview: Student Involvement and College Student Development	51
Impact of Student Involvement on Students of Color	51
Impact of Student Involvement on Women	52
Fraternities and Sororities	54
Brief History: Fraternities and Sororities of Color	54
The “New” Greeks	56
Tying Together the Literature	57
South Asian American Women	57
Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority	59
Introduction to a Theoretical and Methodological Framework	61
Chapter Three: Methodology	63
Theoretical Foundation	63
Theoretical Framework of the Study	66
Positionality	67
Research Methodology and Design	69
Participant Selection	70
Data Collection	72
Individual Interviews	72
Direct Participant Observation.....	73
Focus Group Dialogue	73
Triangulation	74
Data Analysis	75
Trustworthiness.....	76
Limitations	77

Summary	78
Chapter Four: Analysis and Outcomes	80
Data Interpretation	80
Thematic Categories	83
The Founding of Kappa Phi Gamma	84
Positive Self-Image/Pride of Self:	88
Sense of Belonging	93
Building a Bond with other South Asian Women	94
Finding a Home/Family	96
Ownership of a South Asian Identity	98
Fitting In: South Asian vs. East Asian	98
Diversity of South Asian Americans	100
The Impact of Sorority Involvement on South Asian American Women ..	103
Chapter Five: Affirmations of Identity- Conclusions & Recommendations	105
Introduction	105
An Affirmation of Identity	108
The Motivation to Join a South Asian Interest Sorority	108
Impact of Sorority Involvement on Identity Development	112
Conclusions Based on this Study	116
South Asian American Empowerment Model	117
Increased Awareness	118
Triggers Student Identity Development	118
Empowers Student	119
Leads to Group Change	120
Summary: South Asian American Empowerment Model	122
Application of the South Asian American Empowerment Model	122
Academics and the Role of Ethnic Studies	123
Student Services	124
Counseling Services	124
Career Services	124

Multicultural Centers	125
Student Activities	125
Recommendations: Supporting Asian American College Students.....	126
Student Affairs Administrators	126
Asian American Studies Programs	129
Future Research	129
Summary	130
Appendix A	132
Appendix B	133
Appendix C	134
Appendix D	135
Appendix E	136
Bibliography	137
Vita	149

List of Tables

Table 1: Comparison of Thematic Categories	82
Table 2: Composite of Thematic Categories.....	83

List of Figures

Figure 1: South Asian American Empowerment Model.....	117
---	-----

Prologue

When I was 4 years old, I started school at Keyworth's Kiddie Korner preschool. My mother has shared with me that I was a very unhappy child. She tells me that I often came home crying and that I did not want to go to school because people made fun of me. Of course they made fun of me! As the daughter of immigrants, I had a funny accent. I brought funny smelling food to school for lunch. I wore funny clothes. The kids didn't play with me. The teacher "ee-nun-cee-ated" to me when she spoke to me.

I remember playing outside one day, when a bunch of boys started teasing me. While making to be native-american-war-cries-as-taught-by-Americana-TV, they started dancing around me in a circle shouting, "Look at the Indian! Look at the Indian!"

I tried to explain, "I am Indian, but not that kind. I am from India. My family is from India!" To that, one of my peers (and kids can be so cruel) shouted back to me, "Well if you are from India, why are you here? Why don't you go back to where you came from?" Go back to where I came from? I was born in New York! How could I possibly explain this in 4-year-old-speak.

Oddly enough, my parents did just that! My mother took me back to my parents' hometown, Baroda (a city in Gujarat, India). Only a few months after my pre-school experience, I found myself in the first grade at Baroda High School, an English-medium private school for girls. We all wore uniforms- the same navy blue skirts and white blouses, the same white knee-high socks, the same black mary-jane shoes, and even the same black hair ribbons in our hair, braided in two braids. My mother laughs when she

tells me this story, because she says, "...and even when we moved back, you were STILL unhappy!" Of course I was unhappy! I was in a country I really didn't know. I had no friends. There was nothing familiar to me.

At school, I should have been happy. After all, we all did look alike. We wore the same clothes. We ate the same funny smelling food. We were all of the same ethnic background. But then again, I had a funny walk. The girls at school made fun of me because of the way that I spoke. The girls made fun of my lunch box. They called me the "America-wali-ladki" (the girl from America).

I remember trying to explain, "I was born in America. But my mummy-daddy are from here, too. I am Indian, but I am also American." To that, one of the girls (and kids can be so cruel) snidely said back to me, "Go back to America, then, "America-wali." Why don't you go back to where you came from?"

So where am I from? Where am I "from-from" (as most people often ask me to this day)?

Based on my own childhood experiences, I am convinced that a great portion of how we view ourselves in the world is based on the experiences we have as children. While my childhood story is a reconstruction of my mother's and my own memories, it is still indicative of a reality that I lived growing up. As a child, I did not feel as if I had a voice. I had a clear understanding that I was a "different-American," but I did not know where I fit in.

On the first day of 2nd grade at Will Rogers Elementary, I was greeted at the door by a teacher. For whatever reason unknown to me, she began speaking to me in Spanish. I didn't respond to the teacher. I did not know how impacting this encounter would be on

my life, but as a result of this exchange, I was taken to the counselor's office, and later placed into the "English-as-a-second-language-assumed-as-remedial-student-track."

Our class was taught primarily in Spanish, and I remember being very confused, but not being able to voice that confusion. Every three weeks my mother received reports on my progress in school. I continually had high marks for mathematics and behavior. My other marks were consistently poor. "Mamta is not speaking in class... Mamta's reading ability is very poor and she has not grasped basic comprehension skills..." As a result of such feedback, my mother, also a teacher by profession, gave me reading assignments, and vocabulary assignments that I had to complete at home under her instruction. Even after her efforts, my progress reports showed no change during the first half of the school year. Finally, my mother made an appointment to meet with my teacher to see how I could improve my skills. She explained to my teacher that she had been working very diligently with me on reading and writing at home. She explained the assignments that we did together, and expressed her confusion with my lack of progress. At this meeting, my teacher informed my mother that while I was a well-behaved and all around "good student," I simply did not have a "solid grasp" of English which was hindering my ability to progress in the reading and comprehension areas and that I was not participating in class. Upon hearing this, my mother responded to her in shock, "What do you mean that she does not have a solid grasp of English? That is the only language she knows! Why are you talking to her in Spanish? **She is American and her parents are Indian.** How could she possibly know Spanish?!" During this meeting, my teacher discovered that I was fluent in English, and that my lack of participation was rooted in my inability to understand instructions in Spanish. When I was asked by my mother and

by my teacher about why I did not say anything about this, I broke into tears, and said, "Nobody asked me!"

I don't fully remember when I learned to use my voice. I very much remember being a passive participant in my own academic life- which sounds ironic, knowing that my grades were nothing less than stellar during the K-12 years of my life. Yet I accepted all that was taught to me, without challenging it, and without knowing that I could challenge it. The first time I actively challenged anything in school, was in the 2nd grade- it was story time.

I will never forget the day that I was sent to the principal's office for "talking back" to the substitute teacher. It was in the middle of story time, and while I cannot confirm the story that was read to us, in retrospect I think it was the story of the Little Princess, about the little girl who lives in a boarding school. At one point in the story, the teacher said to us, "And the Big Indian Man took off the cloth on his head, unwrapping it, and birds flew out!" So I, being raised Sikh and Hindu, and also VERY confused, said to the teacher, "He can't do that. That's his hair. There are no birds." I was so proud that I had something informative to say, and I knew in my heart that I was right. So I continued to say, "That's his hair- they don't have birds up there!" After a brief exchange back and forth, the teacher sent me to the principal's office, and my mother was called. My mother, not understanding what had happened, also reprimanded me for causing trouble in school.

It is only when I started attending university that I began to develop a heightened consciousness of the complicated nature of my racialized South Asian American identity, along with the ability to articulate my thoughts, opinions, and questions on the subject.

It is the exploration of this identity that eventually led me to a career in Student Affairs as a professional committed to Multicultural Awareness. I can trace back this professional commitment to making sure that students question “who they are and why they are,” to my own experiences of never having this type of educator offering the same support for me when I needed it. I view my own role in the world as an educator who may not have the answers, but I have the “space” for any voice, and I have many questions.

I would not be in this professional place without the support, encouragement, and wisdom of many women of color who have pushed the door a little more open for people like me. When I was an Orientation Advisor (a student who helps coordinate new student programs for incoming freshmen on college campuses), I was selected to be the chair of the Diversity Program (a program designed for all new incoming freshmen to experience, in order to relay the importance of diversity awareness and racial harmony on our campus). I took this position reluctantly- actually angrily. I wanted to be a part of the Campus Traditions committee, and I remember feeling “stuck” with the committee that nobody really cared about. I wanted to be “normal,” and we all know that if you actively support anti-racist work, you are not “normal,” you are a “troublemaker.” I hated diversity training, and I hated the fact that the burden of that awareness fell onto the shoulders of students of color. I didn’t want to be the “troublemaker,” and I didn’t want to feel like the rejected 7-year-old-second-grader in the principal’s office.

When I first started my very first class in my Masters program in higher education, words could not capture my excitement. I was so ready to learn all about how to help college students learn about themselves, and understand themselves, so I was really looking forward to this class, The College Student. The class was one of the most

informative and engaging classes I took that semester. We learned about all kinds of student populations- Athletes, Women, African American students, Latina/o students, Students with Different Abilities, Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Students (Transgendered populations were not addressed at this time), International Students, Freshmen... YOU NAME IT. We learned about identity development theories, and moral development theories. At one point during the semester, we were given the assignment to write about a specific student population group from the list of groups we had discussed in class. So I asked, "Where do I fit in as far as these groups go?" The response I received by my instructor, was "International Student." While I was confused, I proceeded with my paper- feeling as if something was off-base. It was only later that I encountered the body of research on Asian American issues, and how we were always assumed to be "not-from-here." I reflect upon my education, and I am angered- because I feel cheated. How many higher education practitioners go through life thinking that their Asian American students are international students, only to have that myth reinforced in their graduate programs? Was my identity that invisible in the classroom?

With the support of two women, Mrs. Brenda Burt, and Dr. Vagdevi Meunier, I was able to grapple with the frustrations, and emerge with a vision of my own personal career path. Almost ten years (and many stories later), I am the Assistant Director of the Multicultural Information Center at UT, and I help students grapple with the same frustrations.

"The Career Exploration Center is holding a workshop that addresses career choices made by college graduates and we would like your office's suggestions for

potential panelists who could be a part of this program. Do you have any 'Asians' that might be able to participate?"

"Our Education Coordinator is currently not in the office, but she is Asian American, and would be a great speaker for a program like this. Let me give you her card. Her name is Mamta..."

*(interrupting) "Oh, yes, we know Mamta. She would be great! But for this program, we were hoping you could put us in contact with a **real Asian**."*

This very recent story captures the very complicated issues that Asian Americans face in our highly racialized society. In a nation that does not know how to deal with its roots of racism, the growing presence of South Asian Americans complicates the dialogue of Asian American identity, along with the dialogue of a pan-Asian movement. The term South Asian identifies members of those communities who are of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Nepali origin. While these countries are part of the Asian continent, members of the South Asian community are commonly not identified as being "really Asian."

Because people of South Asian descent do not share the same physical features attributed to Asian Americans (as commonly understood by the term), South Asians often do not fit into any racial categories. The problem that inevitably arises in the dialogue of race within the Asian American community is not about specific racial identity, but about the varying degrees of "non-whiteness" within the pan-Asian American community. Furthermore, to ignore racial difference within the Asian American community has the potential to erase "Asian American identities" (Chang, 364, 2000). This ever-changing

degree of non-whiteness has manifested itself in American history (Prashad, 2000; Kibria, 2000).

There is a piece in the discourse on race that has been absent according to Nazli Kibria. This piece involves the “frank and open discussion of the meaning of race, both within and between the South Asian and other Asian American communities” (Kibria, p.249, 2000). My goal as an educator and a member of the South Asian American community is to contribute to this discourse. “As a social fact, race organizes the way we are viewed in society, how we often produce our own cultural communities, and how we struggle against the supremacist parochialism of many of our institutions (that, for all their openness, continue to support unspoken forms of whiteness)” (Prashad, p. ix, 2000). In the preface of his book, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, Vijay Prashad explains that his book is about “the feelings, the consciousness of being South Asian, of being *desi* (those people who claim ancestry of South Asia) in the United States” (Prashad, p. viii, 2000). It is really critical to understand South Asian American identity formation and how this identity formation process resonates with Asian American identity formation, and it is equally important to look at South Asian American identity formation as a separate entity (Kibria, 2000; Prashad, 2000).

It is my hope that this research endeavor contributes to this academic space.

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

As a member of a minority group everywhere in my country except among family or through the self-conscious effort to find other Asian Americans, I alternate between being conspicuous and vanishing, being stared at or looked through. Although the conditions may seem contradictory, they have in common the loss of control. In most instances, I am who others perceive me to be rather than how I perceive me to be. Considered by the strong sense of individualism inherent to American society, the inability to define one's self is the greatest loss of liberty possible... [Asian Americans] cannot invent themselves by sheer will, because no matter how idiosyncratic one's individual identity, one cannot overcome the stereotype of group identity (Wu, 2002, p.8).

As universities strive to meet the needs of their continually diversifying constituencies, the issue of serving diverse populations has steadily been at the forefront of dialogue in higher education. Scholars remind us that “experiences with diversity educate and prepare citizens for a multicultural democracy” (Gurin, et al, 2004, p. 18). Critical theorists remind us that we need to consider how communities have developed taking into account the systemic and embedded oppressions those communities have experienced as a result of a misrepresentation of those communities historically (Gotanda, 1995). We need to consider the connections between valuing multiculturalism, recognizing the needs of diverse communities, and why those needs have not been adequately met.

The Asian American student experience in higher education highlights the importance of recognizing this connection. Very little is known about the Asian American student experience within higher education. On the contrary, “stereotypes and myths of Asians as aliens and foreigners are pervasive in American society” (Takaki, 1998, p. 6). These experiences and stereotypes in turn, shape the identity development of Asian Americans. This chapter provides an introductory look at the socio-political and historical circumstances that situate Asian Americans within current identity

development discourse societally, and also specifically within the space of higher education arena. The first section addresses the context of the study which calls attention to the demographic diversity and projected growth of the Asian American community. The next section sheds light on the consequences of an untold Asian American history. These two sections situate the statement of the problem and the research questions. The chapter concludes with an initial look at the research design.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

For Asian Americans, racial and ethnic identity development is a very complicated phenomenon. The diverse racial and ethnic groups and the differing political histories that make-up Asian America emphasize the importance of looking at such racial/ethnic identity models as just that- a model, or guide to understanding rather than a box for defining a community. Even the term “Asian American” is problematic, because it implies a homogeneous community, with a singular set of values and needs. “Asian American” implies that Vietnamese Americans, Indian Americans, Chinese Americans, Pakistani Americans, have a unified community, culture, and series of experiences. This assumption of a common religious, cultural, and political foundation among these communities is simply not true. One of the common threads across Asian American communities, however, is the sensitivity to group orientation. “For example, Asian people’s view of themselves (the private self) is primarily influenced by what other people (the public), and particularly what a specific group of people (the collective) think of them” (Kim, 2001, p.68). Because Asian American identity is influenced so strongly by external factors, it is important to have an understanding of the various “Asian Americas,” and the impact of historic racism on these communities’ evolution of identities in the United States. This understanding is especially critical given the dramatic shift in population growth projections of the Asian American community.

The demographics of the United States are rapidly changing, and our institutions are not prepared for this change. By the turn of our current century, Asian Americans and Hispanics will comprise over fifty percent of the 18-24 age cohort (Swail, 2002, p. 19). According to analysis of an ETS (Educational Testing Service) report on undergraduate enrollment projections, by the year 2015, the undergraduate population will increase by 2.6 million students, and of those students, 2 million are projected to be students of color (Swail, 2002). Furthermore, according to Armas, “Asians are projected to be the fastest-growing major population category over the next half-century, outpacing blacks, whites and Hispanics. Recent Census Bureau projections show the Asian population could grow by a third, to 14 million, by 2010 and more than triple to 33 million in 2050” (Armas, 2004). Are our institutions of higher education prepared for this growth? “Knowledge of Asian American demographics, diversity, and concerns can do much toward developing higher education policies, programs, and services for Asian American students. Most importantly, student affairs professionals have a critical role to play in addressing and making visible the needs and concerns of Asian American college students” (Hune, 2002, p. 19). In order to shift the perception of the Asian American community, however, it is not sufficient to develop “band-aid” solutions or programs that do not address the roots of these issues. What programs or initiatives do universities offer to support Asian American students on their campuses? The focus of this study will be on critically examining how Asian Americans develop a consciousness of their identities at a predominantly white university.

CONSEQUENCES OF AN UNTOLD HISTORY

It is only through the post-1965 immigration lens that America sees Asian Americans. The legal and political history of more than a century is left out of the education system, and is not even included in the dialogue of civil rights. “We must tell

our stories and our history again in order to shatter the myth and other mistaken beliefs about Asian America. Only then can we bring about social change” (Chang, 1993, p.1288). It is important to have an understanding of this history to “counter the charge that Asian Americans have not faced discrimination and to challenge the myth that Asian Americans are a passive model minority” (Chang, 1993, p.1294). The consequence of the unwritten history and exclusion from civil rights discourse leads the average person to the erroneous assumption that the Asian American community is a “new” and “foreign” community to the United States that is doing well (and in times of xenophobia, “taking over”) and has not experienced racism.

The Asian American experience has been poorly represented in American history. The consequence of this inadequate representation has resulted in the invisibility of the community in higher education research. Why? Much of this neglect comes from two major stereotypes that have affected the Asian American community: the “model minority myth,” and the “perpetual foreigner myth.” Sociologist William Peterson in his January 1966 article, “Success Story-Japanese American Style,” published in the New York Times Magazine, first coined the term, “model minority.” In this article, Peterson concluded that it was the strong work ethic and cultural values that enabled the Japanese Americans to overcome prejudice and to avoid becoming a “problem minority.” The article did not even consider the other political and legal oppressions experienced by the Asian American community before the internment. Essentially, this article (and the several others that followed) became a tool that was used to weaken the civil rights movement (Takaki, 1998). Furthermore, this article, while giving birth to the model minority myth, also gave birth to a notion that Asian Americans did not experience discrimination based on race. In the mid-80’s, yet another wave of “superminority” articles appeared in leading publications, including *Time*, and *Newsweek*. These articles

reinforced the model minority stereotype even further (Takaki, 1998). The direct impact of the model minority stereotype leads to the neglect of Asian American student needs, and a lack of research in the area of Asian American student development (Kodama, et al, 2001).

The “perpetual foreigner myth” is best described by Howard Law School professor and leading Asian American civil rights activist, Frank Wu. He proposes that despite being a third or fourth generation American of Asian descent, it is common for Asian Americans to be asked “where they are ‘originally’ from.” This question may seem harmless, only that when it comes time for Asian Americans to address issues of discrimination, they are then typically told to “go back to where they came from,” despite their generational history in the United States (Wu, 2002). This myth can best be understood through the following examples. Shortly after Kristi Yamaguchi won the Olympic Gold medal for women’s figure skating in 1992, she appeared on the cover of the Wheaties cereal box. An LA radio deejay commented on the cereal box on live broadcast, saying that when he wanted to have his breakfast, he wanted to see “real Americans” on his cereal box cover. What he never realized was that Ms. Yamaguchi was a fourth generation Japanese American (Donvan & Brown, 1999). Similarly, after the 1998 Olympics, the headline of MSNBC proclaimed, “American beats Kwan,” after Tara Lipinski beat Michelle Kwan for the Gold medal in figure skating. Was Michelle Kwan not an American? Asian Americans still struggle to be considered authentically American, and are viewed as conditional citizens of American society regardless of national identity and citizenship status (Tuan, 2002).

The combined impact of portraying an inflated image of success of Asian Americans through the “model minority myth” and the perception of Asian Americans as not legitimate Americans through the “perpetual foreigner myth” is serious neglect of the

discriminatory practices against the Asian American community. This discrimination usually takes the form of violence as illustrated by the brutal murder of Vincent Chin in 1982. Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man, was beaten to death with a baseball bat, by two disgruntled, unemployed auto-workers who assumed he was Japanese, at a time when Japan was emerging as a leading exporter of cars. Chin was targeted because of his racial identity. “Ebens and Nitz perceived Chin as a ‘stranger,’ a foreigner, for he did not look like an American” (Takaki, 1998, p. 482). Similarly, in 1987, Navroze Mody was beaten to death in Jersey City by a gang of white men known as the “Dotbusters” (referring to the ‘bindi’ that South Asian women wear on their foreheads). “This attack took place in the context of other racially motivated hostilities directed against Asian Indians, who were the fastest growing demographic in New Jersey” (Chang, 2000, p. 367). Frank Wu (2002) further explains that “if ordinary people want to act out their aggressions toward Asia, they would not hurt Asians, but Asian Americans. They cannot reach Asia, but they can easily hit Asian Americans” (p. 11).

Even in our current times we have seen trends of racial profiling against Asian Americans. The profiling of U.S. Representative David Wu in 2001 is such an example. Representative Wu was invited to be the keynote speaker at the Department of Energy’s Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Program in May 2001. When Wu and his aide checked in with security, they were both asked to provide proof of their citizenship, and the security also questioned the authenticity of Wu’s Congressional ID card. (OCA Press Release, 2001). Even in the most privileged of environments, Representative Wu became victim to racial profiling based on stereotypes of the Asian American community. Historically we see this profiling through the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. “There has been a history of anti-Asian moods leading to anti-Asian American actions” (Wu, 2002, p.11). We see Asian American stereotypes

of coolies, and religious icons blatantly marketed by Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle, and other global retail clothing companies (OCA Press Release, 2002). Nationally, we have also seen a marked increase in racially motivated hate crimes against South Asian Americans after September 11th. While there are countless examples, even as recently as August 2003 a Sikh family was attacked, beaten, and called “bin Laden,” while they were walking home (Healy, 2003).

While Asian Americans have been active participants in the Civil Rights movement, the murder of Vincent Chin has often been marked as the beginning of the Asian American civil rights movement. Takaki points out that it is the fault of the U.S. education system for not including Asian American history in the curriculum and for not teaching about U.S. society in all of its racial and cultural diversity. “Why are the courses and books on American history so Eurocentric?” asks Takaki (1998, p. 483). This is a question that merits considerable thought for all educators- mainly because this Eurocentric history situates Asian Americans as either un-American, invisible, or honorary-whites (Tuan, 1998). Any of these labels has a drastic negative effect on the identity development of the Asian American community.

The need for specialized attention to Asian Americans students’ identity-relevant issues is often overlooked and not understood on college campuses. “The Asian American population is one of the fastest growing racial groups in the United States and in higher education” (Hune, 2002, p.11). While the population has grown, campuses have not taken the steps to understand the Asian American student community’s identity relevant needs. “Asian Americans have generally been stereotyped as super bright, highly motivated overachievers who come from well-to-do families” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 26). The impact of this image, is that student affairs professionals often fail to notice when Asian American students need help, support, or guidance. Oftentimes, even when

Asian American students seek support, their experiences are actively discounted by administrators. The pressure associated with the “model minority” myth often leads to intense pressure by family, peers, and even instructors, which leads to academic, as well as psychological problems that go unrecognized by student affairs professionals and other university professionals. “Asian American students are looking for guidance, but few members of the institution understand the cultural conflicts these students encounter on campus” (Chew-Ogi & Ogi, 2002, p. 93). If student affairs practitioners are not aware of the stereotypes associated with the Asian American community, and they also do not have an understanding of Asian American racial identity development, then how can they possibly understand the needs of Asian American students? “The model minority and perfidious foreigner stereotypes have had detrimental consequences for Asian Americans in higher education. On the one hand, because Asian American students are stereotyped as ‘problem-free’ high achievers, institutions of higher education have tended to neglect and ignore the many serious problems they have. On the other hand, because Asian Americans are also stereotyped as untrustworthy ‘foreigners,’ Asian American students often encounter racial harassment or are suspected of cheating” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 29). By accepting the “model minority” and “perpetual foreigner” myths, we as educators actively participate in the oppression of Asian American students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Minimal efforts are made by higher education researchers and practitioners on university campuses to explore the identity-relevant ways of integrating and supporting Asian American students on predominantly White campuses. Higher education research on student involvement shows that a student’s peer group has the most significant impact on one’s development during the college years (Astin, 1993). Additionally, researchers show that it is especially critical for Asian American students to find their communities

on college campuses, and that “the students need to be integrated to the campus academically and socially” (Yang, et al, 2002). Policy-makers employ the rhetoric that Asian Americans are not considered “under-represented minorities,” therefore there are limited resources and services dedicated to that specific population. It is imperative for higher education practitioners to develop a greater understanding of the needs of Asian Americans on college campuses by exploring the identity development process of Asian American college students.

Asian American studies scholars have repeatedly noted that Asian American student developmental needs have generally been ignored (Kodama, et al, 2001; Hune, 2002, Kawaguchi, 2003). What is also important to note about the Asian American community, is its vast diversity of ethnic communities. Thus, it is virtually impossible to truly capture a uniform “Asian American experience,” given the diverse histories, cultures, national identities, and values, that converge into Asian America. “An understanding of the complexity of this population is important in developing policies, programs, and services that are more responsive to the needs of Asian American college students” (Hune, 2002, p. 12). Consequently, to understand the mosaic of Asian America, we must attempt to understand the tiny pieces that contribute to the big picture.

The South Asian American community has historically faced marginalization within the dialogue of Asian America. “While notable exceptions exist, attempts at fostering unity among Asian Americans often exclude South Asian Americans, or treat them as a liminal entity, which is dealt with tokenistically” (Davé, et al, 2000, p. 71). This gap within the Asian American studies dialogue is attributed to several factors, including cultural and linguistic differences, religious differences, and physical differences that are most evident between South Asians and East Asians (Davé, et al, 2000). “As the South Asian community continues to grow and evolve, it will be

necessary to understand the complexities of intra- and inter-community relations in order to speak of Asian America in a representative manner” (Davé, et al, 2000, p. 91). This notion has been echoed by many Asian American studies scholars (Shankar & Srikanth, 1998; Vyas, 2001; Mehra, 2003). In an attempt to contribute to this research gap, in this study, I focused on the experiences of South Asian American college women.

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to determine whether involvement in a South Asian American sorority impacted the identity development of South Asian American collegiate women. This inquiry is central to ascertaining how Asian American students engage in identity discourse once they are on a college campus.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors influence South Asian American women’s decisions to join a South Asian American sorority?
2. In what ways do joining a South Asian American sorority influence South Asian American women to think about their identity?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Within this section, definitions of pertinent terms are presented. While these may not be universally accepted, these definitions are applied to the designated terms for the context of this study.

Asian American: Any individual of Asian descent who has been born, raised, and socialized in the United States, or moved to the United States before the age of 5; also known as second generation Asian American

South Asian American: Any individual of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Sri Lankan, or Nepali descent who has been born, raised, and socialized in the

United States, or moved to the United States before the age of 5; also known as second generation South Asian American

Desi: Synonymous term for South Asian American, literal translation is “of the soil”- referring to ones homeland; Since this term has no real geographic attachment, it has been adopted by some South Asians, and South Asian scholars

Racial Identity: “Racial identity is (a) based on a sociopolitical model of oppression, (b) based on a socially constructed definition of race, and (c) concerned with how individuals abandon the disenfranchisement and develop respectful attitudes toward their racial group” (Sodowsky, et al, 1995, p. 133).

Racial Identity Development: The developmental process by which one constructs her perception of her race.

Ethnic Identity: “Ethnic identity (a) concerns one’s attachment to, sense of belonging to, and identification with one’s ethnic group members (e.g. Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian) and with one’s ethnic culture; (b) does not have a theoretical emphasis on oppression and racism; but (c) may include the prejudices and cultural pressures that ethnic individuals experience when their ways of life come into conflict with those of the White dominant group” (Sodowsky, et al., 1995, p. 133).

Sorority: an organization of women undergraduate students usually designated by Greek letters, structured with a focus on scholarship, leadership, and service.

Sisterhood: Synonymous term for “sorority”, “The Sisterhood” refers specifically to Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority in this study.

Line: The collective group of new members who join during the same semester.

Chapter: A local group of a national organization

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study highlights the status of Asian Americans as “othered” in the dialogue of race in America. This study further frames how South Asian Americans are “othered” in the dialogue of Asian American identity, and how this “state-of-being-othered” impacts the development of identity within the context of race in the pan-Asian American identity construction. Nazli Kibria compellingly asserts that South Asian Americans are “ambiguous nonwhites” with no clear racial identity (Kibria, 1998, p. 71).

This ambiguous identity has deep roots in American legal and political history. As a result of this ambiguity, South Asian Americans have not fully engaged in the conversation that surrounds race in the United States. Research on how South Asian Americans develop and perceive their identity is limited. “As South Asian Americans become a more visible presence in the United States, the need for analysis and dialogue about questions of South Asian American identity has become more pressing than ever (Kibria, 1998, p. 69). This study contributes to this much needed analysis and dialogue.

This research also has strong implications for the field of higher education. It provides insights into the identity-relevant needs of Asian American students on predominantly white college campuses, and challenges educators to recognize ways in which their current institutional policies may oppress Asian American students. This research challenges higher education practitioners to evaluate their current methods of serving diverse student populations by considering racial identity in their communication with students. Furthermore, higher education practitioners need to understand values, leadership styles, and perspectives rooted within different racial communities, in order to better serve them. Since institutions of higher education serve as environments where communities converge, issues emerge, and the new generation of scholars, scientists, and

world leaders are developed, this awareness becomes especially relevant to higher education practitioners.

Finally, this research contextualizes South Asian American identity within the discourse of Asian American identity development. This point is critical to this study, because while South Asian Americans are considered to be Asian Americans, these descriptors are still political constructs. Neither South Asian Americans, nor Asian Americans represent homogeneous communities, ethnically, culturally, or racially. This dissertation is an attempt to “express solidarity, but as difference” (Spivak referenced in Chuh, 2003, p. 147). By learning about different communities within Asian America, such as the South Asian American community, this research serves as a reminder that we must recognize South Asian Americans as legitimate voices within the political space of Asian America. “Separation from South Asia and segregation from the Asian American communities has led to isolation, self doubt, and conflict within the diaspora about identity and its definition” (Doshi, 1996, p. 211). A deeper look into the identity-related questions through the qualitative study of a South Asian American sorority might provide insight into this struggle.

METHODOLOGY

The philosophic trajectory of this paper is influenced by standpoint theory, which shapes the infrastructure of this qualitative ethnographic single case study. Standpoint theory, as explained by Sandra Harding (1991), emphasizes the importance of interpreting phenomena from the perspective of the marginalized group, and that any method of inquiry of a marginalized group should begin with the experiences of that group (Harding, 1991). As the researcher, I am committed to a race-based epistemological approach which centers South Asian American women as the primary agents of knowledge for this study. While I understand that the experiences of the South

Asian American women in my study are not homogeneous, my focus is to understand and make meaning of their experiences from their own standpoints. “The developmental experiences of South Asian American girls provide important perspectives in understanding the process of integrating American, South Asian, and female identity development” (Ahmed, 1999, p. 37). Understanding how South Asian American women make meaning of their experiences in college, and develop their identities, through their own words, provides a perspective which is missing within Asian American identity literature.

Consequently, this study will be conducted as an ethnographic case study, and data will be gathered through individual in-depth interviews, participant-observation, and focus group dialogue as means of inquiry and insight into a facet of the Asian American student community. By interweaving the guiding principles of standpoint theory, the ultimate goal of this study is to understand in what ways sorority involvement impacts identity development of South Asian American women.

ASSUMPTIONS

Given the nature of this qualitative study, as a researcher I must hold myself accountable for any research assumptions inherent to my personal identity. This is also my story. It is the interwoven account of how I, too, negotiate my roles as a South Asian American, a woman-of-color, an activist, an educator, an ally, a mentor, an antiracist, an internalized racist, a researcher, and as an Asian American. As a South Asian American woman, my personal voice is very present in this study. As the advisor to many Asian American organizations at The University of Texas, and as a member of the community, I find value in the purpose of “sharing with them some of my experiences as a sojourner in a particular part of the [South Asian] diaspora” (Rayaprol, p.38, 1997). In her chapter responding to Scheurich and Young’s piece on “Coloring Epistemology,” Cynthia Tyson

poetically expresses that “as I reflect on the experience of being black in America, I must weave together the African tribal and American familial, community and religious traditions- folktales, foods, medicine men, priests and priestesses, black churches...” (Tyson, p.75, 2002). Tyson reminds me that I tell the story of how the many values, roles, and identities are in dialogue with one another and how they collectively inform my own development as a human being. As a result, however, I must hold myself accountable by not making generalized assumptions of South Asian American women based on my own upbringing and experiences. While my role as an insider certainly is an asset to this study, I must be cognizant of identity-related assumptions I might make.

Additional assumptions in this study include the assumption that the outcomes of this study are solely and directly attributed to the women’s involvement within the sorority. Also, there is an assumption that as the women share their experiences with me, that they are being honest and completely forthright with their thoughts, and feelings. While these assumptions are present, hopefully, through the triangulation of data collection methods, the assumptions were offset by multiple data gathering approaches, and the length of time I spent with women in the sorority.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

There were two major limitations to this study. First, since I served as an advisor and mentor to Asian American students, my position of power had the potential to impact the responses of the participants. Students may have responded to me based on what they thought I wanted them to say, or what they believed the ‘right’ answer to be, and not necessarily an honest reflection of their truth. Second, since the participants were all members of a South Asian American sorority, it was impossible to ascertain whether their identity development process could be attributed solely to sorority affiliation and participation.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors which motivated South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, and how that involvement might have impacted their identity development. This study was not meant to be an in-depth analysis of sororities as a whole. Nor was this study meant to develop generalizations of the South Asian/Asian American community. The focus of this ethnographic case study was on the identity development of South Asian American women in one specific sorority. First, the study is delimited to a single South Asian American sorority at a large research institution. Thus students' responses, reactions, and reasons for joining the sorority were only indicative of their campus culture. This also prevented me from generalizing any emergent themes to the entire Asian American community, Asian American female community, and even South Asian American females. Second, the participants were all female, given the structure of sorority membership. As with the first limitation, this also limited generalizability to the entire community.

SUMMARY

I hope for this dissertation to be a snap-shot look into the identity development process of South Asian American women involved in a South Asian interest sorority. In turn, I want to share the voice of the community in the academic sphere where this voice is missing. Attempting to understand different facets of Asian America allows us to understand the true complexity of what it means to really understand Asian America. This process involves understanding the communities that make up Asian America. "To address, account for, and accommodate difference, we must remember that there is no common subject of Asian American studies; there are only infinite differences that we discursively cohere into epistemological objects" (Kuh, 2003, p. 147). Identity is developed based on differences, thus it is really critical to understand South Asian

American identity formation within the context of Asian American identity formation, and it is equally important to look at South Asian American identity formation as a separate entity (Kibria, 2000; Prashad, 2000).

Exploring how Asian American students develop a consciousness of their identities in a collegiate environment is critical in order to develop a perspective of Asian American identity development. The poor recording of Asian American history has resulted in the branding of Asian Americans as “model minorities” or “perpetual foreigners” in the dialogue of identity politics in the United States. By understanding the impact and implication of these stereotypes, we can further ascertain how Asian Americans develop a consciousness of their own identity development.

By shedding light on the factors which motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, and how involvement in the sorority might impact the identity development of the women within the sorority, the outcomes of this study add to the much needed literature within higher education research. Not only does this study add to research on identity development, it also has strong implications within the field of student leadership development and student involvement. This study underscores the need for research of marginalized populations within higher education, and how those communities develop support systems. Additionally, within the sphere of Asian American studies, this study adds to the literature on the experiences of South Asian American women within the collegiate arena.

This dissertation was organized into five chapters. Chapter two provided a review of the relevant academic literature needed to contextualize the study. Chapter three provided the methodological framework and approach. The data analysis methods and thematic results were presented in Chapter four. Finally, Chapter five completes the

story with a look at the inter-relatedness of the themes which emerged through data analysis, along with recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the relevant literature that informs the academic discourse pertaining to Asian American issues. In order to have a clear understanding of present-day Asian America, it is necessary to be familiar with how history positions Asian Americans in our current discourse on identity development. Accordingly, this chapter is organized into four major sections. The first section is a historic overview of Asian America, and how the invisibility of Asian American history results in major misconceptions of the Asian American community. Additionally, this section also specifically introduces the history, experiences, and challenges of South Asian Americans within the Asian American community. The second section transitions into the examination of identity development theory. Within this section, there is also a particular focus on Asian American racial/ethnic identity development. The third section addresses how extracurricular student involvement on college campuses, specifically fraternities and sororities geared toward students of color, impacts the lives of college students. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of gaps in the current academic literature surrounding Asian American students, along with an introduction to the methodology of this study.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ASIAN AMERICA

In a “Minority Student Leadership Issues” course that I help teach, I introduce Asian America by doing an introductory activity. I ask the students to name three things that they learned about Asian American history in high school. Each time I do this activity, I get responses including (but not limited to) “the Great Wall of China,” “Gandhi,” “Hiroshima,” etc. Some students may mention “the Japanese internment,” or “the building of the railroads.” Students (and society) often confuse the history of Asia

with the history of Asian America, and while these histories are connected, they are not the same, nor are they interchangeable. These responses are very indicative of how poorly Asian American history is represented within American history. Based on information provided by our current American history texts, Asian Americans and their contributions to American history have been virtually non-existent. In this section, I offer a brief overview of important factors which need to be considered in order to begin developing an understanding of Asian America. Consequently, this section covers a brief historic overview of Asian America, myths attributed to the Asian American community, and an introduction to the South Asian community.

A Brief Historic Overview

In order to best understand the shaping of Asian America, it is best to follow the legislative history of the United States as it pertains to Asian Americans. “The fate of Asian America has always been intertwined with U.S. immigration policy, which has determined its population size, shaped its ethnic composition, and defined its socioeconomic character” (Ong & Leung, 2003, p. 7). In 1790, the first United States nationality act opened the process for naturalized citizenship to “free white persons.” In the mid 1850’s, Chinese laborers were recruited to assist in completing the transcontinental railroad. “By the 1870’s, the Chinese had become the largest racial minority in [California], and whites, including many immigrants, viewed these Asians as unwelcome economic competitors and heathens incapable of being assimilated” (Ong and Leung, 2003, p. 8). Consequently, this fear and racism manifested itself through the legal system. During the same time frame, the California Supreme Court determined in *People vs. Hall* that Chinese people did not have the right to testify in court (Wu & Song, 2000; Takaki, 1998). In 1878, the court ruled that Chinese were not eligible for citizenship as they were “not white.” Interestingly, this case became the first of many cases in which

the U.S. judicial system defined race. In 1880, California passed section 69 of the Civil Code refusing marriage licenses to whites wanting to marry people of color, including the “Mongolians” (in reference to the Chinese). In 1882, the first in series of Chinese Exclusion Acts, banned Chinese laborer immigration to the U.S., and proclaimed Chinese people ineligible for citizenship. This act was renewed ten years later, and then made permanent in 1904 (Takaki, 1998). In the early 1900’s Punjabi Sikhs began immigrating to California as farm laborers. By 1908, the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed, and through its efforts resulted in the 1913 Alien Land Law barring “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from purchasing or owning land. In 1917, the “Asiatic Barred Zone” which included India, was determined, and immigration from this zone was banned (Wu & Song, 2000; Takaki, 1998).

Following this series of legislation, many Supreme Court cases impacting Asian Americans emerged in the mid 1920’s. In 1922, the Supreme Court denied a Japanese man’s request for naturalization because he was not “Caucasian,” in *Ozawa vs. United States*. Less than three months later, in *United States vs. Thind*, the Supreme Court denied an Indian man’s request for naturalization under his assertion that Asian Indians are “Caucasian,” with the argument that Thind was not Caucasian as “commonly understood by the term” (Wu & Song, 2000; Takaki, 1998). Through this ruling, the Supreme Court boldly defined racial identity and a clear legal explanation of White and Caucasian as synonymous terms. Two decades later, in 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 mandating the internment of over 110,000 Japanese Americans (Ong & Leung, 2003).

It was only in 1952, with the McCarran-Walter Act, did Asian Americans gain the right to become citizens through the naturalization process. In 1965, the Hart-Celler Immigration and Naturalization Act lifted the prior bans on Asian immigration, and

increased the limits of Asian Americans allowed to immigrate into the United States, still limiting those immigrants to highly educated individuals and their families. “The 1965 passage of the Hart-Celler Act...led to tremendous growth of the Asian Pacific American population” (Ong & Leung, 2003, p. 9). While the growth of the Asian American population in from the late 1960’s up to present-day has been attributed to immigration with 68% of the Asian American population being foreign-born in 2000, population projections indicate that over the next 20 years, U.S. born Asian Americans will make up a larger proportion of the Asian American population (Ong & Leung, 2003, p. 10).

Myths Associated with Asian Americans

America sees Asian Americans through a post 1965-immigration lens. The legal and political history of exploitation, violation of civil liberties, and overt racism of the past centuries is overlooked, while a skewed perspective of the Asian American community is built based on the demographics of the post 1965-immigrant community. “During the late 1960’s and 1970’s, the United States experienced a severe shortage of high-skill workers, and the Hart-Celler Act enabled the country to recruit foreign workers to fill the gap” (Ong & Leung, 2003, p. 13). While immigration bans may have been lifted, Vijay Prashad reminds us that during this time frame, “those who migrated here came through the filters of the INS” (Prashad, 2000, p. 169). What is important to understand about the consequences of this legislation, is that the U.S. government and policy-makers hold responsibility for skewing the demographics of the Asian American community through the limiting of immigration to only high-skill laborers. This inaccurate representation of Asian American history results in misconceptions of the Asian American community.

Model Minority Myth

The concept “model minority,” introduced in Chapter 1, is one such misconception of the Asian American community. The term was coined during the mid-1960’s, at a time when America was in the middle of a racial crisis during the Civil rights movement (Lee, 1999; Prashad, 2000; Chan, 1991). This crisis is most visible through a report published by President Johnson’s Secretary of Labor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, titled “Report on the Black Family,” in which he “admonished African Americans to rehabilitate their dysfunctional families in order to achieve economic and social assimilation” (Lee, 1999, p. 150). Other articles followed:

Shortly thereafter, articles like “Success Story of One Minority in the US,” published by *U.S. News and World Report* in 1966, trumpeted: “At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation’s Chinese Americans are moving ahead on their own, with no help from anyone else.” *Newsweek* in 1971 had Asian Americans “outwhiting the whites.” And *Fortune* in 1986 dubbed them a “superminority.” (Thrupkaew, 2002).

Essentially, the model minority myth was created as a deliberate attack of advocates of the civil rights movement as an effort to invalidate African American and Latino activists’ petitions for justice (Chan, 1991; Wu, 2002). “The model minority myth assumes that Asian Americans have been fully accepted in U.S. society, are similar to Whites in their beliefs, and are equally prosperous as the dominant majority” (Linnehan, et al, 2003, p. 1332). In addition, the model minority myth has resulted in the obscuring of problems faced by many disadvantaged communities within the Asian American community (Moy, 2003).

Perpetual Foreigner Myth

The erroneous assumption that Asian Americans are “forever foreigners,” is also a stereotype most Asian Americans experience. The “perpetual foreigner” myth is the

notion that Asian Americans are not legitimate Americans. In April 2003, I interviewed for the position of Assistant Dean of Students, a position with a primary focus on advising and serving the Asian American population, at the University of Virginia. During one portion of my interview, I was asked the question, “How do you plan to integrate the activities of the international Asian students with the Asian American students in this position?” My response, though bold, was, “I plan to use the same strategies that UVA currently uses to integrate the international British students with the White American students.” After this statement, I went on to explain that while it was important for us to advise students, we needed to be cognizant of our deeply rooted assumptions about our student populations. The assumption that international Asian students and Asian American students have the same needs and were potentially the same population leads into the importance of why we as educators must understand the perpetual foreigner myth. “Despite a collective history spanning more than 150 years, Asian ethnics still face stubborn resistance and incredulity when they attempt to assert their third generation or later American status” (Tuan, 1998, p. 157). Furthermore, this myth is based on racial identity. Frank Wu points out that During World War II, while Japanese Americans were stripped of their civil liberties and forced into internment camps, German Americans and Italian Americans remained free (Wu, 2002). While the U.S. was at war with the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan, why is it that only citizens of Japanese descent were considered a threat? Even in more recent times, “When Matt Fong, a fourth generation Californian, ran for state treasurer in 1994, he was asked by reporters whether his loyalties were divided between the United States and China” (Kang, 2000, p. A3). Also shared in Chapter 1, the MSNBC headline “American Beat Kwan,” in the 1998 Winter Olympics further illustrated how the perpetual foreigner myth plays out in American identity politics.

Cumulative Impact of these Myths

There are many implications and consequences of the model minority myth and the perpetual foreigner myth. First and foremost these myths renders the Asian American community invisible in many spaces. When data on Asian American communities are lumped together, specific communities in need of assistance are not able to access resources. “The most recent census data available show that 47 percent of Cambodians, 66 percent Hmong (an ethnic group that lived in the mountains of Laos), 67 percent of Laotians, and 34 percent Vietnamese were impoverished in 1990- compared with 10 percent of all Americans and 14 percent of all Asian Americans” (Thrupkaew, 2002). Additionally, the model minority myth leads our society to believe that Asian Americans do not experience racial discrimination. Ironically, as a result of the model minority myth, the opposite holds true- glass ceilings are placed against Asian Americans under the claim that the Asian American community is accomplishing too much. “The discrimination which Asian Americans, in fact, face can be reinforced by the exaggerations of the model minority myth. This occurs, for example, when non-Asian Americans believe that Asian Americans should be subjected to maximum quotas in college admissions because they have done too well and represent unfair competition” (Subcommittee Hearing on H.R. 2128, 1995, ¶ 22). In a similar vein, the perpetual foreigner myth is very harmful to the Asian American community. When Taiwanese American Johnny Chung donated campaign funds to the Clinton-Gore campaign, allegations were made that the funds were illegal campaign funds from China used to support foreign interests. Author Timothy Min asks, “Why does the media not label Henry Kissinger as a German diplomat or Madeline Albright as the Czech diplomat, both immigrants to the U.S. like Mr. Chang?” (Min, 1997, ¶ 18). The murders of Vincent Chin and Navroze Mody discussed in Chapter 1 are also clear examples of how

perceptions of the Asian Americans as the model minority and the perpetual foreigner resulted in increased hate crimes, mistrust, and discrimination against members of the Asian American community. Asian Americans are “othered,” and consequently not seen as fully American (Min, 1997, Donovan & Brown, 1999). Ultimately, these perceptions rooted in racism result in the marginalization of the Asian American community in social, academic, and political realms.

The impact of the model minority myth and the perpetual foreigner myth is especially necessary to understand within the educational arena. “The persistence of [the model minority] myth continues to result in negative consequences for APA’s [Asian Pacific Americans], particularly the inaccessibility of services and other opportunities within the educational enterprise” (Chang, 2003, p. 204). The assumption that Asian Americans, as a monolithic entity, perform well leads to the dismissal of Asian American student needs in the classroom or in non-academic student services.

Furthermore, it is the combination of the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner myth that has the most detrimental effects on Asian Americans. There has been an increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans over the past decade. “The underestimation of the seriousness and pervasiveness of racial animosity perpetrated against APA’s and the inadequacy of services to address this problem are of course much bigger issues because racism is not just limited to higher education” (Chang, 2003, p. 207). In a policy oriented arena, the results of Harvard Graduate School of Education study reflected:

They used data from California and a simplified model of the University of California admissions process to explore how various approaches to admissions affect the diversity of the admitted student population. They found that giving preferences to applicants who are either from low-income families, urban and rural areas, high schools with low graduation rates, or whose mothers are less well-educated, did not always substantially increase the admissions rate for

African Americans and Latinos, but consistently increased the representation of whites at the expense of APA applicants. (Chang, 2003, p. 206).

Ultimately, the combination of assumptions as Asian Americans not being ‘really’ American, and that they are doing extraordinarily well, positions the community as expendable, as portrayed in this admissions study. Furthermore, once again, Asian Americans are pitted against African Americans and Latinos, hindering coalition-building across communities of color- especially on issues of racism.

Questioning the Term: Asian America

“The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (W.E.B. DuBois)

The concept of “race” is deeply implanted in the discourse of power, access, equity, and voice in the United States. “As a social fact, race organizes the way we are viewed in society, how we often produce our own cultural communities, and how we struggle against the supremacist parochialism of many of our institutions (that for all their openness, continue to support unspoken forms of whiteness)” (Prashad, 2000, p. ix). The answers to the questions surrounding race are ultimately the same answers to the question “Who is authentically American?” This question is relevant when exploring the issues of all communities of color, and is especially salient in the dialogue surrounding Asian America. The term “Asian American” encompasses any and all individuals who are descendants of countries in Asia. The problem and challenge with the category “Asian American” is that while the communities that make up Asian America may have similar histories of oppression, the communities are so profoundly diverse that the general populace is not clear about who makes up Asian America. “The category Asian American is a composite that lumps together ethnic groups separated by socioeconomic, historical, and generational differences” (Tuan, 1998, p. 38). Historically, the term Asian

American emerged from the activist movement of the late 1960's. "To seize the essentializing terminology of the majority culture as applied to one's minority group, and to transform it into a label of power involves at least two stages: first replacing the pejorative or incorrect label with a self-chosen name, and second, assuming that self-articulated label as a badge of pride, describing the group's historical and cultural foundations and asserting its unique identity" (Shankar & Srikanth, 1998, p.3). As a result, the term "Asian American" was born out of rejecting the oppressive term 'Oriental' which was attributed to people of East Asian descent. Thus the term Asian American originally did not include communities outside East Asia, although it now includes all Asian nationalities and ethnicities. Nazli Kibria challenges the purist idea of race with the question, "If Asian American is not bound by a set of readily identified physical characteristics, in what sense does it signify a racial group?" (Kibria, 1998, p. 951). The answer is simple and complicated- 'Asian American' is a coalitional term that brings diverse communities with paralleled histories of oppression together. "In the context of census data collection, the term has an extremely broad usage as a category based on geography, encompassing all people who originate from Asia and live in this country. A narrower definition of 'Asian America' focuses on 'consciousness'- or what we call felt identity- and commonly includes only people from East and Southeast Asia" (Shankar & Srikanth, 1998, p. 3).

South Asian America

Given the historic referencing of the term Asian American, it becomes more clear why South Asian Americans (people of Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Nepalese, Sri Lankan, Indian, and Pakistani descent), are not seen as Asian American. Furthermore, a look at legislative history reveals that while South Asian Americans lived in the United States prior to 1965, it was the lifting of the ban on immigration in 1965 that allowed more

South Asians to enter the United States. Since the history of Asian America is not adequately represented, the Asian American community has only been represented as a “race of foreigners” (Ong, p.4). “Reinforcing the scarcity of information taught in school is the invisibility of South Asian Americans in the media’s homogenization of the Asian American image: someone with eyes without epicanthal folds, a flat nose, pin-straight black hair, and almost white skin. The racism that lumps Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Vietnamese Americans into one Asian image excludes South Asian Americans, and strongly dissuades them from identifying with Asian Americans as a group” (Gupta, 1998, p. 129). It is also important to note that the ambiguity of the South Asian community as “Asian American” is also rooted in history. “In the United States, where people are classified on the basis of exclusive and pure groups, South Asians are ambivalent about their race” (Khandelwal, 1998, p.118). Since South Asian Americans do not fall into “pure race categories,” the community becomes invisible within Asian America, and within the racial discourse of the United States. On the other hand, while the community may become invisible in dialogue, it is certainly not invulnerable to racism as noted by this example from history:

Confusion about the “exact” race of South Asians have characterized the entire course of their history in the United States. In 1929, a few South Asians, in order to claim their right to naturalize, presented themselves as anthropologically Caucasian, citing their descent from the Aryan race. Yet, in 1965, President Lyndon Johnson cancelled visits of the heads of state from India and Pakistan with the statement, “After all, what would Jim Eastlan [conservative senator from Mississippi] say if I brought those two niggers over here. (Khandelwal, 1998, p. 117-118).

The same community, that was considered according to anthropological definitions as “non-White Caucasians,” was referred to by the President Lyndon B. Johnson as “niggers.” Through this example, we can clearly see the racial identity challenge of South Asians. Furthermore, through this example, we also see that racial

identity truly relies upon phenotypic features. As a result, within Asian America, where there is an “understood” physical image of who is Asian American, South Asians, who appear physically different from East Asians, tend to be ignored and even dismissed as a legitimate Asian American community (Khandelwal, 1998, p. 118).

The term “South Asian American,” to some degree, allows people of South Asian descent to enter the racial discourse of Asian America. “Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshi, and other South Asians are physically and culturally similar to one another and distinct from other Asian groups, especially from East Asian groups” (Min & Kim, 1999, p. 31). The term “South Asian” was not created to separate the Asian American community, rather to build internal coalitions. “Thus, the term ‘South Asian’ marks a political stance for a younger generation of activists. [It] has become an organizing tool for recognizing common terms and fighting against common injustices beyond national borders and throughout the diaspora” (Shah, 1997, p. 49). While it is highly unlikely that a first generation immigrant would self-identify as South Asian American, the term has been embraced by the communities of the second generation and beyond. It is important to note, however, that there are some inherent assumptions about the term “South Asian.” Because Indian Americans are the largest population within the South Asian American community, oftentimes, the term South Asian and Indian are perceived as synonymous. “While the term ‘South Asian’ can be problematic if it points to a group that is solely Indian and Hindu, it is useful for marking the region’s shared histories and cultures. The term ‘South Asian’ is particularly useful in a diasporic context- such as in the United States- because it refers us to a collective homeland” (Shah, 1997, p. 53). It is important for scholars to be as inclusive as possible in the discourse of Asian (and South Asian) American racial construct, so that communities are not marginalized.

While Asian Americans are “othered” in the racial discourse of America, South Asian Americans are “othered” in the racial discourse of Asian America. Much of the research on Asian American identity focuses either solely on East Asian American populations, or pan-Asian populations with minimal South Asian American participants as seen in the cited studies (Kim, Rendon & Valdez, 1998; Lee & Davis, 2000; Yeh & Huang, 1996; Yeh & Wang, 2000; Lee & Yoo, 2004). While these research studies provide great insight and reveal themes of inquiry critical to the Asian American community as a whole it becomes problematic when South Asian Americans make up the third largest Asian American population in the United States, yet the community is minimally considered in research studies on Asian Americans. “The tendency for most people in the United States to envision Asia and Asians as exclusively from East Asia is one that affects the ongoing identity struggles of South Asians all over the country” (Doshi, 1996, p. 202). South Asian American scholars assert that it is imperative that South Asian Americans are considered legitimate members of the Asian American community, yet there must also be a space where South Asian American racial discourse is a unique area of inquiry and exploration (Maira, 2002; Kibria, 1998; Shankar & Srikanth, 1998).

Racial politics situates communities in powerful ways. That we might gain a clearer insight into the racial identity politics of the Asian American community, it is important for us to realize that the community itself is very diverse. “Watching a river flow by, one notices the confluence of different tributaries flowing into the river, with some parts hitting rocks or taking wider turns, and others taking different paths. Similarly, there is diversity among Asian Americans, who come from different places, have different appearances, and encounter different obstacles, though appearing on the surface to have a common identity” (Uba, 1994, p. vii). Understanding the development

of identity among Asian Americans becomes a central factor in being able to support Asian American students on college campuses.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Over the past few decades, the discourse on identity development has grown immensely from its one-dimensional beginnings. The foundation of identity literature is based in the work of Erikson and Marcia. Erikson, influenced heavily by Freud, ego identity development over the span of the human life cycle. Erikson's model proposed 8 stages with each stage centering around an area of "conflict." Each of these stages coincided with one's life cycle, and Erikson's fifth stage, Identity vs. Role Confusion, suggested that during adolescence, one faced the challenge of developing a sense of identity. Additionally, he proposed that an achieved identity was the result of questioning and exploration that usually occurred during adolescence, which eventually led to an understanding of one's identity. Furthermore, Erikson asserted that this identity development process was not necessarily an individual process, but that it was impacted by one's personal history (Erikson, 1968). James Marcia, who is credited with building upon the ego identity model framed by Erikson, proposed four ego identity statuses. These statuses are "based on whether people have explored identity options and whether they have made a decision" (Phinney, 1990, p. 502). Phinney summarizes Marcia's model:

A person who has neither engaged in exploration nor made a commitment is said to be *diffuse*; a commitment made without exploration, usually without exploration, usually on the basis of parental values, represents a *foreclosed* status. A person in the process of exploration without having made a commitment is in *moratorium*; a firm commitment following a period of exploration is indicative of an *achieved* identity. (Phinney, 1990, p. 502)

Critics of Erikson and Marcia call attention to the absence of the consideration of ethnic identity within these models (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Jackson, 2000; Sidhu, 2000).

Ethnic Identity Development

“An oppressed group’s experiences may put its members in a position to see things differently, but their lack of control over the ideological apparatuses of society makes expressing a self-defined standpoint more difficult” (Collins, 2000, p. 39). According to Patricia Hill Collins, it is necessary to understand and interpret an individual or community’s identity through their positioning in society. Understanding racial identity development theory with an Asian American lens may serve as a necessarily critical part of addressing the implications of race and racism for student development (Alvarez, 2002). “A basic premise of racial identity theory is that psychological well-being is enhanced by a person’s progression through increasingly mature statuses of racial identity” (Alvarez, 2002). Within the Asian American community, there is a heavy intersection between racial identity and ethnic identity that must be taken into account. According to *The Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*,

Racial identity is (a) based on a sociopolitical model of oppression, (b) based on a socially constructed definition of race, and (c) concerned with how individuals abandon the disenfranchisement and develop respectful attitudes toward their racial group. On the other hand, ethnic identity (a) concerns one’s attachment to, sense of belonging to, and identification with one’s ethnic group members (e.g. Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian) and with one’s ethnic culture; (b) does not have a theoretical emphasis on oppression and racism; but (c) may include the prejudices and cultural pressures that ethnic individuals experience when their ways of life come into conflict with those of the White dominant group” (Sodowsky, et al., 1995, p. 133).

Like most subordinated racial communities, Asian Americans have been forced to view themselves through a Eurocentric lens, and as a “problem” community (Yu, 2000). It is critical to understand the impact of this imposed, racist, perspective on the Asian American community. Being able to understand how people of color negotiate their ethnic identities is critical for higher education professionals. While identity development models appear linear and sequential in nature, it is essential to remember

that these models merely serve as tools for inquiry and understanding, not diagnosis or placement. The following sections highlight prior ethnic identity models that have influenced the development of an Asian American Identity Development model.

Theory of Nigrescence

William Cross's Theory of Nigrescence is a five-stage model that was developed to study Black identity development at the adult level (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2000). The first stage, *Pre-Encounter*, reflects one's identity prior to any challenge to that identity. Additionally, this is the stage where one has internalized values of the dominant society as their own values, while potentially de-valuing their own values. The second stage, *Encounter*, is typically triggered by an event that challenges one's identity, forcing her to re-examine their ethnic identity. During the third stage, *Immersion-Emersion*, one delves into their ethnic identity, connecting with the community through involvement in activities, etc., and also rejecting the norms of the dominant culture. The fourth stage, *Internalization*, marks an internalization of a confident Black identity. Finally, the fifth stage, *Internalization-Commitment* takes this internalization one step further- with the commitment to educate others on Black history, identity, and research initiatives that empower the community as a whole. Furthermore, this stage is reflective of one's commitment to the community (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2000). Cross's 5-stage theory has been applied to adolescents by Beverly Tatum, author of "Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?". Tatum suggests that while Cross's model is applied to adults, that children began examining their ethnic identities as early as junior high school (Tatum, 2003). Jean Phinney, also underscores the notion that this questioning process occurs during early adolescence.

Ethnic Identity Development

Jean Phinney's research draws upon the ego identity research to explore ethnic identity development among adolescents. Phinney suggests that "the formation of ethnic identity may be thought of as a process similar to ego identity formation that takes place over time, as people explore and make decisions about the role of ethnicity in their lives" (Phinney, 1990, p. 502). By examining different ethnic identity models, along with Erikson and Marcia's ego identity formation, Phinney developed a three-stage ethnic identity model. In the first stage, ***Unexamined Ethnic Identity***, one has not been exposed to their ethnic identity. According to Phinney, there are two manners in which this stage might manifest itself. Either one might not be interested in her ethnic identity, which is described as diffuse, or one might have internalized views of her ethnic identity based on the opinions of others (usually family, parents, etc.), which is described as foreclosed. The second stage, ***Ethnic Identity Search***, "involves an often intense process of immersion in one's own culture through activities such as reading, talking to people, going to ethnic museums, and participating actively in cultural events" (Phinney, 1990, p. 503). This stage marks a time where one is actively seeking to understand the role that ethnicity might play within her life, and may even include rejecting the norms of the dominant culture. Ultimately, as a result of this exploration, one reaches the third stage, ***Achieved Ethnic Identity***. This stage marks recognition of one reaching a deep understanding of their ethnicity (Phinney, 1990). Phinney also cautions "the meaning of ethnic identity achievement is undoubtedly different for different individuals and groups because of their different historical and personal experiences" (Phinney, 1990, p. 503).

Phinney's research also underscores understanding facets of ethnic identity-including self-identification, sense of belonging, positive ethnic attitudes, and ethnic involvement and practices (Phinney, 1990; Lee & Yoo, 2004). Scholars have used

Phinney's framework to assess the impact of ethnic identity on self-esteem and sense of belonging (Lee & Davis, 2000; Lee & Yoo, 2004).

People of Color Racial Identity Development

Janet Helms identifies a six-stage process for a People of Color Racial Identity Model that includes Conformity, Dissonance, Immersion, Emersion, Internalization, and Integrative Awareness (Helms, 1995). While different communities have differing histories, this model helps practitioners in student affairs understand their students' needs. Student affairs practitioners who support the "programming of only dances, cultural shows, and food fairs without an equal emphasis on understanding a larger sociopolitical context may be insufficient in promoting Asian American student development within a larger racialized context" (Alvarez & Liu, 2002, p. 75). Furthermore, understanding this model allows for student affairs professionals to design programming and activities that are developmentally appropriate, and inclusive to their diverse student populations.

Helms cautions that stage-theories have the potential to oversimplify the complex nature of the identity development process. So, while certain experiences may be placed in certain stages, these processes are not as clean-cut as they may seem through description. The first stage, ***Conformity***, embraces the color-blind perspective of life. Individuals at this stage strive to conform, or assimilate into White culture and identity (Alvarez, 2002). This stage is usually accompanied by internalized self-hatred as a result of devaluing one's own racial identity while striving to conform to White racial norms. The next stage, ***Dissonance***, is usually reached when a student has had an experience which marks her/him as different from her/his White peers. It is important to note that dissonance occurs as the student tries to process her/his color-blind world view with the differential racial treatment (s)he may receive (Alvarez, 2002). College is a catalytic

environment for students to experience such dissonance, often for the first time. Essentially, the emotional impact of the dissonance stage is a loss of naïveté and idealism of racial identity. The third stage of *Immersion/Emersion* is especially relevant because it is during this stage that the student seeks to find “truths” about her/his racial identity and community. Oftentimes, a student in this stage seek out solidarity among her/his racial communities, as well as classes that offer her/him more insight into her/his racial history and her/his feeling of oppression (Alvarez, 2002; Lee 2000). Finally the last two stages, *Internalization* and *Integrative Awareness*, mark a re-defining of self, based on new knowledge and self-exploration and hopefully a development of “self-affirming racial self esteem” (Alvarez, 2002, p. 40).

Asian American Identity Development Theory

The models developed by Cross, Phinney, and Helms have many things in common. While Cross’s theory was formed with special attention to African American identity development in adults, Phinney’s research suggests that an awareness of ethnic identity is present during early adolescence. Helms offers a people of color racial identity development model, also derived from Cross’s model.

Scholars have also proposed models to better understand the how Asian Americans perceive and negotiate their racial/ethnic identities. For Asian Americans, racial identity and ethnic identity are inseparable, as they experience discrimination and oppression at the racial level. This section of the literature review explores different frameworks that have been developed with Asian American ethnic/racial identity as the focal point.

Model of Acculturation: Sue & Sue

Sue & Sue's model of acculturation proposes that Asian Americans can be placed in to one of three categories. The first category, ***traditionalist***, describes an individual who values traditional ethnic values and practices. The second category, ***marginal***, encompasses those who value some ethnic aspects and some dominant values, but does not fit into either group. The third category, ***Asian American***, marks those individuals who associate themselves with the dominant culture (Sue & Sue, 1990). In comparison to other identity development models, this model oversimplifies the identity development process, and it also assumes that these characteristics are separate of one another. Under this model, one would be forced to choose between the values associated with her ethnic identity and the values of the dominant culture, as there is not a category that offers an integration of ethnic identity with mainstream norms. Furthermore, this model contributes to the already existing stereotypes of Asian Americans (Yeh & Huang, 1996). The labeling used in this model also assumes White identity as the norm, and then places Asian American identity development relative to White norms.

Asian American Identity Development Model: Jean Kim

Jean Kim offers a five-stage model of Asian American Identity Development. This model was originally developed as the outcome of Kim's dissertation which looked at the identity development of Japanese American women. As with any stage model, Kim's model is not without criticism, however, Kim's model centers the experiences of Asian Americans as the foundation of the model. "Student affairs professionals need to recognize and articulate the value of student development theory as it relates to Asian American students" (Alvarez & Liu, 2002, p. 77). Each stage represents a "social consciousness" about being Asian American. The first stage, ***Ethnic Awareness***, is the recognition of one's ethnic identity. This recognition comes from being around one's

social communities, exposure to cultural activities, and ethnic group involvement. Children are usually in this stage before they began attending school, during the time while they are still predominantly in their home environments. At this stage, a child has an understanding of ethnic heritage and his/her source for this understanding is the family. The second stage, *White Identification*, manifests itself with the individual's realization of "being different" from her/his peers. Students experience this stage, usually through being teased by their peers for differences in appearance, name-calling, and mimicry of their cultural attributes. "It is not uncommon for Asian Americans to experience taunts and harassment for their physical appearance by their peers, prejudice and discrimination from college and university administrators, and invisibility in K-12 education and post-secondary curricula" (Liang, Lee & Ting, 2002, p. 83). Since Asian Americans' sense of self is influenced greatly by external factors, students often internalize these experiences and develop negative self-images. This stage also leads Asian American students to "whitewash" their identity, with the goal of fitting in and attempting to be accepted by one's peers. Identity in this stage becomes a process through which external images (through media, peer groups) are absorbed, and the student must negotiate white mores (Kodama, et.al, 2002). Furthermore, during this stage, Asian Americans typically adopt "white norms" as their own norms, and they are inclined to even suggest that racism and racial difference does not exist.

The third stage, *Awakening to Social and Political Consciousness*, is a stage that marks a dramatic shift of consciousness. During this stage, an Asian American becomes conscious of her/his political and social identity beyond her/his "white lens." Prior to this stage, since "racism didn't exist," Asian Americans developed a sense of self-hatred and blamed themselves for negative experiences they might have encountered in school or society. This stage marks the awareness of racial dynamics, and more importantly the

awareness of institutionalized white racism. So how does one make it to this third stage? Through her research, Jean Kim discovered that people in this stage were in some way connected to political involvement, campus activism, and even different ethnic studies courses. Through campus unrest of the late 60's and the 70's, Asian Americans developed a consciousness as people of color, and then began to explore their own racial identity (Hune, 1994). One of the other interesting points to note about this stage, is that "White norms" are rejected for building coalitions with other oppressed racial groups.

The fourth stage, *Redirection to an Asian American Consciousness*, takes the racial identity exploration one step further. In this stage, we find Asian Americans searching for their Asian American history. This stage is marked by a search for histories not taught, and an immersion into the Asian American experience (not to be confused with the cultural heritage experience of Stage 1). In this stage, students are usually angry as they learn more about the historic oppression of Asian Americans. Students in this stage also seek a peer group of others who are asking the same questions and experiencing the same emotions. The fifth stage, *Incorporation*, is the result of feeling a sense of peace with one's Asian American identity. In effect, this stage marks a comfort level with one's racial identity, and also one's ability to blend this identity with his/her other social identities.

What is especially unique about Jean Kim's theory, is that it allows for a broad definition and interpretation of who is "Asian American." Whether we are referring to immigrants who have become "American," people who were born in Asia and came to the U.S. as children, people of Asian descent who were born in the U.S., and even Asian American adoptees in non-Asian American homes, Kim's model is developmentally applicable in all cases. Using my own experiences to show this applicability, this stage-model can apply to my parents who have lived in the U.S. for 30 years, my cousin who

moved here from India to attend university in the U.S., or myself, an Asian American born and raised in the United States. The reason for this applicability is that Asian Americans at any part of their lives have a consciousness of their ethnic identity and heritage, and the journey of this model begins from that point. I have seen my parents work within the Indian community, and later transcend into working with pan-Asian American communities as a result of their own developmental journey. Since the Kim model looks at Asian American identity from the standpoint of how Asian American identity is formed based on external impact, and then subsequent internal transformation, virtually all variations of Asian American identities can be explored with this model.

This five-stage model of Asian American identity is formulated as a racial identity theory, and not an ethnic identity theory. Kim emphasizes this distinction because while Asian Americans have similar experiences as a result of ethnic difference, those differences are a result of racial stereotypes. “If ethnic identity does address the influence of oppression, it is at the racial level rather than at the ethnic and cultural level” (Sodowsky, et al., 1995, p. 133). The Vincent Chin murder case is an example of this assertion, as is the association of South Asians to terrorists associated with the September 11th attacks. This five-stage model is important to understand for many reasons. This model helps break certain Asian American stereotypes, even for Asian Americans who may have internalized those stereotypes. “In addition to examining external influences such as family and culture, Asian American scholars challenge us to recognize the developmental and psychosocial implications of race and racism” (Chew-Ogi & Ogi, 2002, p. 94).

Gaps in Identity Development Literature

There is much room for research on Asian American Identity Development. “In general, not enough critical attention has been paid to Asian American youth” (Maira,

2002, p. 18). Since the Asian American population is the fastest growing population in higher education, we must consider the identity-relevant needs of this younger generation of Asian America (Alvarez, 2002; Kawaguchi, 2003; Kodama, et al, 2002; Kodama, et al, 2001; Mehra, 2003). “Research on Asian Americans has tended to focus on the adjustment of first-generation immigrants” (Min & Kim, 1999, p. 11). Referring to the earlier discussion on the diversity of Asian America, Laura Uba also reminds us “a wider variety of Asian American groups need to be studied” (Uba, 1994, p. 250).

Within the context of South Asian America, minimal research has been done to explore how South Asian Americans understand their identity. Do South Asian Americans even see themselves as Asian Americans? “Unfortunately, empirical research on how South Asian Americans understand their racial identity is currently limited” (Kibria, 1997, p. 72). An ideal environment in which to study racial identity is a university environment, where students may experience catalytic and transformative moments that shift their consciousness of their racial identities. The college context offers many second-generation [South Asian] Americans the opportunity to become a part of a [South Asian] American peer group on campus” (Maira, 2002, p. 107). The study of the impact of involvement in student organizations on the psychosocial development of Asian American students gives us insight into how Asian American students develop understanding of their Asian American identities, and how that understanding might change based on their experiences in college.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Beyond the practical significance of student involvement experiences, a comprehensive body of research supports the significance of student involvement experiences in college (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). From the angle of psychosocial development, Arthur Chickering’s student development theory has been

widely accepted by student affairs professionals as a means of understanding the developmental impact of involvement on college students.

Theoretical Overview: Student Involvement and College Student Development

Chickering's theory offers 7 vectors, or challenges that a college student encounters. These vectors are: 1) developing competency, 2) managing emotions, 3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, 4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5) developing identity, 6) developing purpose, and 7) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The foundation of this theory is based on the notion of identity development being the primary developmental task for college students. Critics of Chickering's model point out that it was developed using White middle class males, and that it does not take into account the impact of oppression on students (Kodama, et al, 2001). While these vectors offer themes for investigation, they do not transfer to diverse populations without critique and intervention. Thus it is critical to see how student involvement impacts marginalized populations, and their development of identity.

Impact of Student Involvement on Students of Color

Students of color at predominantly White institutions often feel isolated, disconnected, and marginalized. Adjusting to college life is a difficult process, and prominent researchers in higher education emphasize that student involvement within the university setting is vital in order for students to feel a sense of belonging within their college environment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). While the concepts of "sense of belonging" and "student involvement" are important, they do not take into account a student's sense of disconnect to her/his institution because of her/his racial identity. In their case study of Black students on a White campus, Fries-Britt and Turner observed "many Black students have found the predominantly White institution

environment to be isolating because of the lack of critical mass of Black students, faculty, and administrators” (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001, p.420). The authors further stressed the importance of developing mechanisms that would generate this critical mass that serves as a support system for Black students (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). In her research on Indian American youth within race-specific youth groups in New York City, Sunaina Maira (2002) noted that nearly all of her interviewees had a strengthened perspective of their ethnic and racial identity. Student narratives in Maira’s study repeatedly expressed a feeling of “coming out” by the participants who spoke positively of their South Asian American organizations. “Interestingly the metaphor of ‘coming out’ to describe this ethnic revival crops up in narratives of other second-generation Asian American youth who experienced the shame attached to this ‘closeted’ and racially stigmatized ethnic identity in childhood, demonstrating the power of social context to produce ritualized affective responses that reflect the political predicament of a collectivity” (Maira, 2002, p. 107). Ultimately, these studies reflect the need for more studies on the role that race-specific student organizations play in making students feel welcome in predominantly White environments, which inevitably means engaging students of color in racial identity discourse to a point where they are comfortable with their racial identity. There is a definite need for this kind of research within the Asian American community (Lee & Davis, 2000; Maira, 2002).

Impact of Student Involvement on Women

Just as the developmental needs of people of color are necessary to serve communities of color, studies that reflect the developmental needs of women are needed to understand how women’s needs differ from men. Carol Gilligan’s work points out that women develop differently from men, thus the developmental models such as those proposed by Erikson or Chickering do not consider the woman’s identity. She further

posited that because women develop within the contexts of their relationships, women develop intimacy at earlier stages within their developmental process- thus critiquing Erikson's model which suggests that one must develop identity before one can explore intimacy (Gilligan, 1982; Greeley, 1991). More research needs to be done on how women develop their sense of identity. Currently, "studies consistently report the erosion of girls' self-esteem and self-confidence from childhood through high school" (Whitt, 1994, p. 199). The transition to college for women might serve as a point of intervention if offered the necessary opportunities to stop this "erosion." In their longitudinal study of women leaders, Astin and Leland identified some key factors that had positive influences on the development of women in college. Some of these factors included the opportunities for leadership positions, leadership positions in all female settings, and exposure to female role models (Astin & Leland, 1991). By joining an all female group, like a sorority, "women engage, individually, and collectively, in constructing themselves as women" (Handler, 1995). Essentially, women can become active participants in their identity development process.

Professionals in higher education must be able to recognize the unique needs of women. "Specifically, the values and styles of women leaders may be different than male leaders. Ignoring or devaluing such differences can stifle the growth of students, their organizations, and their institutions" (Guido DiBrito & Batchelor, 1988, p. 53). Furthermore, women of color experience a dual invisibility, as a result of their marginalized gender identity and marginalized racial identity. While women are already experience limited access to opportunities, "excluded from even the social and personal access accorded White women, minority women have scarce entrée into political and organizational power structures" (Hughes, 1988, p. 64). Consequently, the development of women of color is impacted due to exclusion on the basis of both gender and

ethnic/racial identity. As educators, it is important for us to also understand how women of color succeed on college campuses, and how we can support their success.

Fraternalities and Sororities

When first encountering the term fraternity or sorority, immediately stereotypes of these groups come to mind. While the predominance of research done regarding social fraternities and sororities offer criticism of these entities, it is also important to recognize the positive impact of these groups on college students. “Theory and research on Greek organizations provide contrasting views of the effects of fraternity or sorority membership on students’ cognitive development” (Pike & Askew, 1990, p.14). Based on their observation of extra-curricular experiences, Kuh and Lyons offer insight into the developmental impact of fraternity and /or sorority involvement on college students:

A fraternity or sorority can provide a caring, supportive, and human scale subcommunity in which students develop and practice interpersonal and leadership skills, make friends, learn how an organization works, develop common cause, have fun, recreate together, and develop a balanced approach to college life. A sorority or fraternity is often a safe place to examine and experiment with various facets of one’s identities (Kuh & Lyons, 1990, p. 20).

What is most important to note, however, is that none of these studies take into account the diversity between the history and development of White fraternities and sororities, as compared to the history and development of fraternities and sororities of color.

Brief History: Fraternities and Sororities of Color

While the growth of predominantly White fraternities and sororities of might be at a crossroads, the growth of fraternities and sororities of color are rapidly increasing. The history of Greek life for people of color began with the formation of the first African American fraternity in 1906, Alpha Phi Alpha, at Cornell University. Since Black students were denied access to social communities and support systems afforded to White

students, the fraternity structure allowed a space for Black men to address these issues. Within 10 years, 3 more Black fraternities emerged (McKenzie, 1990). Around the same time frame, sororities for Black women began to emerge on HBCU's. "The sorority has always been an important source of training for Black women, whose opportunities to exercise such skills in formal organizations are few" (Giddings, 1988, p. 16). It is interesting to see that the Black sororities emerged on HBCU's, reflecting the need for a female space, even among a campus that shared the same racial/ethnic identity. It is also critical to recognize the difference between Black Greek letter organizations and White Greek letter organizations. While White Greek letter organizations were founded to develop a social network, Black Greek letter organizations were founded to be a safe space for African American students, as well as a forum through which African Americans worked to serve and uplift their communities (McKenzie, 1990; Giddings, 1988).

One way of furthering our understanding of racial identity development is within the fraternities and/or sororities specific to communities of color. Walter Kimbrough, in his research of Black fraternities and sororities, hypothesizes that these organizations historically served as support systems for Black students in racially hostile campuses (Kimbrough, 1995). Furthermore, Kimbrough emphasizes that Black Greek organizations also provide opportunities for leadership and involvement for Black students (Kimbrough, 1998). Because the history of Black Greek organizations dates back to the early 1900's, we are able to recognize the positive impact these organizations have on Black students who are members of these organizations. Kimbrough's students who were members of Black Greek organizations were more likely to be involved in other activities and developed a positive self identity. Furthermore, because many Black students experienced difficulties in attaining leadership opportunities in predominantly

White/mainstream campus organizations, students joined a Black Greek organization “to alleviate these feelings of powerless and isolation in the larger campus community” (Kimbrough, 1995, p. 72). Within a Black Greek organization, not only do students gain leadership experiences, but they also build a home and safe space for their community. This model of a safe space has recently been embraced by other racial/ethnic communities.

The “New” Greeks

As Walter Kimbrough notes, “our conceptions of the fraternal experience, or Greek life as it is commonly known, were based entirely upon the experiences of White men and women, and organizations founded by these students as far back as 1776 with the advent of Phi Beta Kappa” (Kimbrough, 2002, ¶ 2). In the early 1900’s, Black Greek letter organizations emerged. “General Greek life activities and events, including Greek Weeks, often excluded these groups, either by intention or by oversight, and attempts to fit them in within the rush and alcohol-dominated agendas of [White Greek letter organizations]” (Kimbrough, 2002, ¶ 8). The 1970’s marked the beginning of the Latino Greek life movement, although the first Latino Fraternity was formed in 1931. The 1970’s also witnessed the creation and growth of Asian American fraternities, with over 12 fraternal organizations by the end of the decade. However, the first Asian American fraternity was formed at Cornell University in 1916, and the first Asian American sorority, Chi Alpha Delta, was founded at UCLA in 1928. The histories of fraternal organizations within the Latino and Asian American communities are not comprehensively known, and “it is accurate to say that the vast majority of higher education was completely unaware of the presence” of these groups (Kimbrough, 2002, ¶ 7). Kimbrough further projects that with the continued growth of Asian Americans on college campuses, the increase in Asian American Greek life will certainly follow. At

The University of Texas at Austin, there are currently 12 Asian American fraternities and sororities.

So the question remains- What is the attraction to Greek life? Students want personalized experiences, where their identities are understood, and where they feel visible (Reisberg, 2000). Fraternities and sororities provide a unique space where students of color can connect with one another, socialize with one another, and yet give back to their communities.

Tying Together the Literature

Because racially specific Greek organizations serve as a safe space for members of their communities, it can be assumed that students who seek to join such organizations are looking for a place to call home while in college. Ideally, by studying fraternities and/or sororities of different racial communities, a researcher would be able to extract common themes relevant to their identity development. For this specific reason, I chose to study the effects of a South Asian American sorority on the identity development of South Asian American women. In order to understand the population more thoroughly, this section offers insight into identity relevant struggles faced by South Asian women, as well as an introduction to Kappa Phi Gamma sorority.

South Asian American Women

As for all women of color, the challenge of negotiating multiple marginalized identities is common for South Asian women. There are many challenges which South Asian American women address daily, purely by existence. The first, is the duality of Eastern/South Asian identity vs. Western/American identity. South Asian American women are stereotyped as one dimensional passive participants of their identity, which leads to the natural assumption- if South Asian identity is passive, then Western identity

must be active or progressive. Debjani Mukherjee challenges this imposed duality. “This oppositional construction of the two cultures essentializes, acontextualizes, and leaves the individual without an active role in creating her context. It reifies and grossly stereotypes cultures as if there is one [South Asian] culture and one American culture” (Mukherjee, 2000, p. 284). This belief is shared by other South Asian feminists, who also within spaces for feminists of color, have been dismissed as passive, or submissive (DasGupta & Das DasGupta, 1993).

Another challenge for South Asian American women is the conceptualization of self. From early childhood, South Asian American women develop an understanding of their identities as women, as carriers of their culture, as their families’ *izzat* (honor/reputation), from their home (Ahmed, 1999). Struggling with the defined role functions associated with being a South Asian female are interwoven into a woman’s sense of self. South Asian American women are “sometimes overwhelmed, negotiators of complex multidimensional realities, who find ways of coping and adjusting to sometimes very difficult pressures to conform in two (or more) very different societies” (Mukherjee, 2000, p. 285). There are not typically any peer outlets to address this pressure, thus this struggle often becomes a source of isolation for many South Asian American women.

Ultimately, the overarching challenge of South Asian American women, which encompasses many of the struggles they may face, is the freedom to self-define themselves. “South Asian American women are usually defined in terms of the other or in opposition to some other category. They are either not like South Asians or not like Americans. Add to this the layer of being a woman and we are left to deal with the cultural baggage and stereotypes ascribed to both categories of women” (Mukherjee, 2000, p. 281). The potential outcome of this struggle is that South Asian women are

forced to react to definitions of their identities placed upon them, rather than be active definers of their own identity.

There has been some research done on South Asian women who have organized groups within the community. Jyotsna Vaid's research documents the development of South Asian women's organizations from the late 1970's to 1999. However her work does not consider college women (Vaid, 1999/2000). While there is a body of research that does exist, most of the research is centered around women within activist groups. Little attention has been given to the identity development of South Asian American women- especially second generation women- and while narrative voices about identity struggles are reflected in literature and anthologies, the process of identity construction has not been explored through research (DasGupta, 1997).

Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority

Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Inc., was officially founded on November 8, 1998, in the basement of Jester Residence Hall at The University of Texas at Austin, by 27 founders of diverse South Asian origins. The first sorority, nationally, geared specifically toward South Asian women, the founders committed to building a sisterhood based on 8 principles: character, leadership, scholarship, sisterhood, service, womanhood, culture, and self. Once the women determined these principles, they began developing the sorority around fostering those principles through community service, philanthropic efforts, social interactions, and professional development. In the early stages of sorority development, the founders wanted to make sure that all of the women had a voice in the process, and that all women were able to contribute based on the skills they brought to The Sisterhood, thus initially, there were no hierarchies formed. The sorority functioned as a collaborative effort of multiple committees which focused on unique aspects of the sorority's development. The committees sought the assistance of higher education

professionals, faculty, counselors, South Asian women leaders in the community, and fraternity and sorority leaders nationwide to thoroughly gather research. From this research, the women developed an organizational structure, intake process, and collective vision of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority. The women spent over a year developing a means to operationalize their vision of The Sisterhood, and in December 1999, they took in their first group of new sisters. As of today, Kappa Phi Gamma has expanded nationally, and has chapters/colonies on 8 universities nationwide.

Kappa Phi Gamma is known for its high standards and expectations of women who are within the sorority. The Sisterhood is committed to the empowerment of South Asian women, and it distributes the “Emerald Endowment Scholarship” yearly, to a South Asian female college student (women in the sorority are not eligible to apply), who demonstrates and embodies the 8 principles of the sisterhood, and who also shows commitment to the upliftment of the South Asian community through her extracurricular activities. Kappa Phi Gamma maintains a balance of philanthropic efforts and community service efforts- raising funds for cancer awareness, yet also serving the community at-large as needed. Furthermore, this year marked the inaugural “EMPOWER” Retreat- an event dedicated to the development of leadership and wellness for South Asian women. Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority has also been recognized by the Greek Life and Education office for their outstanding work, and several women from the sorority have earned “Order of Omega,” and “Greek Spotlight” honors from that office. Kappa Phi Gamma as an organization continues to pioneer standards of excellence, and provide a space for South Asian women to connect with one another and develop personally and professionally.

Unlike other race-specific organizations that may have other goals, and may also be male dominated (ex. Asian American Culture Committee, Asian American Health

Professionals Organization, Chinese Bible Study), the goals of the South Asian American sorority, Kappa Phi Gamma, are geared solely toward empowerment of the South Asian American woman and the South Asian American community. At a basic level, the structure and goals of the sorority already potentially increases the likelihood of women wanting to participate in a project, such as this study, that leads to greater awareness of their racial community. Through the study of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, my goal was to identify and understand the factors that motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, and I also hoped to understand the ways in which involvement in a South Asian interest sorority might impact the identity development of South Asian women. While understanding a group affiliation and attachment to ethnic identity is important, “[it] cannot capture the dynamism and fluidity of an individual’s construction and experience of ethnicity and identity” (Min & Kim, 1999, p. 11). To capture this dynamism, an ethnographic case study that allows for narrative voices to be present was an ideal means of inquiry.

INTRODUCTION TO A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Standpoint feminist theory underscores the importance of centering voices and experiences of marginalized communities. This study, which focused on how South Asian American women were impacted by their experience in a South Asian interest sorority, was conducted as an ethnographic case study. This means of qualitative inquiry is germane to this area of research because ethnographic studies are in-depth observations of a cultural community or system. Within an ethnographic study, researchers “begin with the awareness that they are at once a product and a producer of history, and hence that their analysis itself historically constituted and cannot be otherwise” (Toren, 1996, p. 103). Additionally, this study was framed as a case study. “Case study research calls for researchers to systematically investigate a [phenomenon] within a real-life context and

answer questions of ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ instead of simply ‘What?’” (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002, p. 71). Essentially, combining these two approaches, an ethnographic case study allowed for a descriptive analysis of a South Asian American sorority, along with insight into how involvement in the sorority might have impacted the identity development of South Asian American women. This study provides a clearer perspective on the factors which motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, and how South Asian American women come to understand their identity through their involvement within the sorority.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Denzin and Lincoln state, “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (2000, p. 3). So far, Chapter one has provided a preliminary contextual overview of the purpose of this study, and has introduced the reader to the primary research questions posed in this study. Chapter two has provided a review of the current academic literature necessary for situating this study. The goal of this chapter is to show the process by which the “world” of the participants in this study became visible. This chapter is organized into five major sections. The first section is an insight into theories that have influenced my own epistemology as a researcher. The second section offers a theoretical framework that is applied to the methodology of this study. The third section is a detailed description of the methodological design of the study. The fourth section reflects on my positionality as a researcher. Finally, the fifth and final section addresses potential methodological limitations of the study.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

“No one will speak about what no one else sees. From the relative safety of academia, it is time to hear our own voices, to silence the ones that say “stop acting your color.” This is the privilege we earned from generations before who made wise choices. They survived so we could flourish, so we could speak up, act up, do right, with our colors flying” (Matsuda, 1997, p.58).

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to determine how affiliation, membership, and participation in a South Asian American sorority potentially impact the identity development of South Asian American collegiate women through two central research questions:

- 1) What factors motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority?
- 2) In what ways do joining a South Asian interest sorority impact the identity development of South Asian American women?

This study is inspired by a feminist standpoint epistemology, which affirms that “women’s experiences become resources for social analysis and it is women who should be able to reveal what women’s experiences really are” (Rayaprol, 1997, p. 36; Harding, 1991). Consequently, to seek hypotheses for these questions, I refer to the voices of feminist scholars of color.

Scholars of color have offered epistemologies appropriate and relevant to their own communities’ standpoints. For example, Black feminist epistemology developed by Patricia Hill Collins emphasizes the need to address facets of inquiry that is centered around the Black woman’s standpoint (Patricia Hill Collins, 2000, p.256). These facets include: 1) Lived experience as a criterion of meaning; 2) The use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims; 3) The ethics of caring; 4) The ethic of personal accountability; and 5) Black women as agents of knowledge. Further explained by Gloria Ladson-Billings, she essentially challenges the researcher, and the respondents with the following questions: “What have you been through? What are you talkin’ about? How do I know you care and, by the way, who are you?” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 270). Ultimately, this epistemological approach re-connects researchers of color with communities of color, and it offers a critique of the traditional paradigm. Furthermore, this epistemological approach expands the limits of qualitative research- creating a space committed to representation of under-represented voices.

Similarly, Dolores Delgado Bernal has identified a Chicana feminist epistemology. “How educational research is conducted significantly contributes to what

and whose history, community, and knowledge is legitimated. A Chicana feminist epistemology addresses the failure of research paradigms that have distorted or omitted the history and knowledge of Chicanas” (Bernal, 1998, p.574). Bernal asserts that Chicana researchers possess “unique viewpoints that can provide us with a perspective [she calls] ‘cultural intuition’” (Bernal, 1998, p. 563). The sources of ‘cultural intuition’ serve as the components of Chicana feminist epistemology which is “grounded in life experiences of Chicanas and involves Chicana research participants in analyzing how their lives are being interpreted, documented, and reported, while acknowledging that many Chicanas lead lives with significantly different opportunity structures than men or White women” (Bernal, 1998, p.555).

Borrowing from these epistemological approaches from prior scholars of color, this study centers South Asian American women as the agents of knowledge. This study, through the use of narrative voices of Asian American women participants, can help education practitioners become conscious of the experiences of South Asian American women on predominantly White college campuses. By applying the principles of standpoint feminist theory, and paralleling the core principles of both Black feminist epistemology and a Chicana feminist epistemology, I deliberately make a commitment to reflect the active role that South Asian American women play in their identity development experience. “South Asian American women are constantly negotiating, reconstructing, redefining their identities. They are not passive, conflicted individuals but active, reflexive, creative negotiators of the contexts and influences in their lives” (Mukherjee, 2000, p. 280). In due course, drawing upon this theoretical foundation which informs this research endeavor “enhances [my] ability to examine [South Asian American] women’s lives in cross cultural or comparative contexts” (Rayaprol, 1997, p.

139). It is with a deep commitment to this theoretical premise that I developed the necessary framework for the methodology used in this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

First and foremost, this study is deliberately defined as an ethnographic case study. This research combines the overlying principles of an ethnographic study, in that it is a qualitative research method that focuses on interpretation of culture, and a case study, in that the study pertains to a specific unit, a South Asian American sorority, to inform the research. As Stake points out, the “case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied” (Stake, 2000, p. 435). Thus, while this study is conducted using a case, Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, the methodological approach is ethnographic in nature.

Ethnographies are commonly carried out in case-study format, as they “represent a detailed study of the life and activities of a group of people” (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991, p. 4). The case study structure allows for the study of a group over a snap-shot of time, in order to deeply understand the complexities of the group. “There is further advantage to using the case study, and this relates to a cultural studies interdisciplinary approach and its concern to examine different elements within social and cultural processes” (Gray, 2003, p. 68). Essentially, an ethnographic case study allows for an in-depth look at a unit of analysis, in this case a South Asian American sorority, to develop general understanding of what factors may impact the identity development process of South Asian American women on predominantly White college campuses. “A well chosen case study can produce ‘intensity’ and an example of condensed layers of meaning, which, through careful analysis, can produce insights into cultural processes” (Gray, 2003, p. 68).

POSITIONALITY

The role of the researcher as a participant-observer is important to recognize within ethnographic research. This role requires maintaining a delicate balance of relationships with the participants in the study. As a South Asian American woman, I am an insider to the racial community that I study- making this study intertwined with my own racial identity journey. “Experimental ways of writing first-person ethnographic texts are now commonplace” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. x). Informed by this premise, as the researcher I use first-person narrative to share the research, analysis, and voices that inform this study. “I speak from a subject position that makes situated, partial knowledge claims rather than grand universalistic knowledge claims. Conveying such a subject position helps disrupt the omniscient observer of scientific realist narratives” (Foley, 1998, p. 114). The use of personal voice and presenting my positionality as a researcher further situates this case study of a South Asian American sorority as an ethnography. Thus, through an ethnographic case study, I aim to identify the impact of involvement South Asian American sorority on the identity development of South Asian American women.

It is the responsibility of the ethnographic researcher to share the connections between the community she is researching and herself (Reed-Danahay, 2002). As a South Asian American woman, this study is very personal to me as a researcher. As an ethnographer, I must own the biographical element to this study (Coffey, 1999). At some level, learning about how South Asian American women negotiate their identities triggers self-reflection for me. Consequently, I cannot separate the perspectives I bring into this study as a woman of color, a South Asian American, a sister, a scholar, an activist, etc. My cumulative life experiences inevitably influence the trajectory of this study at some level. “There is no pretense that I am deploying an abstract, universalistic, scientific

theory without personal roots” (Foley, 1998, p. 112). Rayaprol further asserts that as a researcher, there is a distinct benefit of being an insider of the community that is being researched. She reminds me that “often, feminist research begins from the researcher’s own experience” (1997, p. 38). As a fellow South Asian American, I share many of the identity struggles with the participants in my study. Interestingly, I negotiated the role of being an insider to the sorority in terms of our shared identities as South Asian women, yet an outsider to the sorority in terms of sorority membership. “This insider/outsider status often provides easier access to individuals within the [sorority]- access which may be otherwise difficult to obtain, especially when dealing with culturally sensitive issues” (Gupta, 1999, p. 25).

While I was not a member of the sorority, the women of Kappa Phi Gamma have embraced me as one of their own, as a *dididi* (translation: respectful term for elder sister) and they have shared many experiences and stories with me about their struggles, triumphs, and life experiences. We developed a relationship based on trust and “sisterhood” that created a space for authentic and powerful discussions about our identities. I grounded myself in the *vishwas* (translation: trust, faith) that my own South Asian American identity, a shared identity with the women of Kappa Phi Gamma, strengthens this study and consequently, this narrative.

I am not attempting to make universal assumptions, but I am seeking themes that may give a deeper understanding of why South Asian American women choose to join South Asian interest sororities. While the results may not offer universal claims, it is my hope that they certainly contribute to the dialogue surrounding South Asian/Asian American student life on predominantly White campuses. Ultimately, this study has two parallel objectives. The first objective is to contribute to the discourse on how Asian

Americans fit into the larger discourse ethnic/racial identity development in our society. The second objective, more personal in nature, is to share the voice of my community.

By sharing the story of the creation, development, and expansion of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Inc., a South Asian interest sorority, I want to share the story of how South Asian American women have renegotiated their identities and claimed their space on a predominantly White university campus through the creation of a South Asian interest sorority. Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority challenges the dominance of whiteness in the arena of student organizations. The women of the sorority may not realize their individual roles in this experience, however, they collectively contribute to questioning “white cultural norms” that have “othered” students of color, and specifically South Asian American students, in the college environment. In her research of women in the Indian Diaspora, Aparna Rayaprol cautions her readers to not view her work as giving voice to a passive community of women whose voices have been unheard. Rayaprol emphasizes that her role as a researcher is to show how the women in her study transform definitions of normal through their everyday realities. (Rayaprol, 1997). Borrowing from Rayaprol, I also want to make it clear to my readers that it is not my goal to “give voice” to the women and the sorority. My goal is to bring the realities of South Asian American women into the conversation on ethnic/racial identity development, and how this sorority may serve to transform our own perspectives on student involvement at the college level. Rather, my goal is to “amplify” this already existing voice, and bring it to a space where this voice may have not been considered.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This research study is a qualitative study. Wolcott states, “qualitative inquiry is more than method, and method is more than fieldwork techniques” (2001, p.93). The research methodology and design sits on a theoretical foundation of standpoint theory, as

discussed in prior sections. As a result, my challenge was to develop an appropriate methodology that centered the voices of the participants of this study, and also held me accountable as a researcher. “Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). Ultimately, my goal was to develop a methodology which would generate data that offered insight into the meaning that the South Asian American women of Kappa Phi Gamma have placed in their sorority experiences. Through this inquiry, I hoped to develop greater understanding of experiences that inform South Asian American women’s identity formation on predominantly White college campuses. Finally, through an analysis of their stories, I hoped to see themes emerge, which might shed light on the research questions central to this study.

Participant Selection

In this qualitative study I sought a purposeful sample of fifteen to twenty South Asian American women who were members of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority in an effort to better understand how involvement in the sorority might impact the identity development of these women. “The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (Patton, 1987, p. 52). My positive and authentic relationship with the sisters of Kappa Phi Gamma as their organization advisor allowed me access to potential participants. I also sought assistance from the National Board of Regents of the sorority as an entry point to conducting this study with individual women in the sorority.

During Summer 2004, I sought permission from the National Board of Regents to interview the women of Kappa Phi Gamma for this study, along with their assistance in connecting me with potential participants. Initially, I conducted a pilot study on two

graduates from The University who were founding members of the sorority while in college. This process allowed me to fine-tune the interview protocol, and also assess whether or not the interview protocol generated answers relevant to the research questions posed in this study. Through this process, I felt confident in the interview protocol, and also decided to develop selection criteria to generate my “purposeful sample” population to be interviewed. The selection criteria for interview participants included the following: 1) Each participant must have been a member of the sorority for at least one year. 2) Each participant must have held a leadership position within the sorority. 3) Each participant must have been involved in at least one other student organization on campus. These criteria were developed in order to get deeper perspectives of the sorority from women who had invested in the organization over time, and also to access some level of comparison with other student organizations within which the participants may have also participated.

The final sample consisted of 17 women who varied in age, ranging from age 19-21, and within the classification range of sophomores to seniors. Additionally, this sample included the interviews with the founders of the sorority from the pilot study, who were college graduates, and were either working professionals or in a post-graduate program. The participants all self-identified as South Asian American, yet were very specific about their background. The interview pool included women who were of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Indian descent. Women referred to themselves by their sub-ethnic/regional/religious/cultural identities- including Malayalee, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi backgrounds, as well as their religious identities- including Catholic, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, and Hindu during the course of the interview. The interviewees also represented a diverse choice of academic majors. All interviewees were either born in

the United States, or immigrated to the United States with their families from their prior homeland as young children.

Data Collection

To minimize the probability of misinterpretations, this study employed multiple data collection techniques. “For qualitative casework, these procedures are generally called triangulation. Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2000, p. 443). Accordingly, data was collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct participant observation, and focus group dialogue.

Individual Interviews

By September 2004, with permission and full support of the National Board of Regents, I contacted the sorority by email communication to see if there were women willing to participate in this study. At this point, I was met with great excitement over this project. Several women expressed interest in wanting to share their sorority experience, and ultimately I ended up with 17 interviewees. Interviews were conducted at different campus locations, based on the comfort level and convenience of the participants. I conducted one in-depth interview with each participant. Each interview lasted about one and half hours. The interview process comprised of semi-structured open ended questions to collect data (see Appendix A) on the reasons why the participant sought membership and joined a South Asian American sorority, how this particular sorority compared to other sororities and other organizations, examples of how the sorority has impacted their college experience. With informed consent, I recorded the interview using a standard tape recorder and audio tape. This interview design allowed me to ascertain each participant’s perceptions of identity as determined by their decision

making process to join the sorority, and whether or not the sorority involvement had any influence on the participant's identity development as a South Asian American woman. Upon completion of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed into a text format.

Direct Participant Observation

Throughout the school year, I attended all of the sorority events that were open to the public, along with those to which I was personally invited. These events included recruitment meetings, sisterhood events, professional development events, ritual events, service events, parents' weekend, and even Greek Life events through the Office of the Dean of Students. This participant-observation was critical, because "as a technique of research, participant observation distinguishes itself by breaking down the barriers between observer and participant, between those who study and those who are studied" (Burawoy, 1991, p. 291). Since an "ethnography becomes a collective enterprise of participant and observer" (Burawoy, 1991, p.291), I participated in these activities, as any other attendee, and so as to not disrupt the event, I recorded my observations after the event.

Focus Group Dialogue

Closer to the end of the data collection period, I arranged a focus group meeting with the sorority. I chose to conduct a focus group dialogue, as it is a space for a small group of participants to share their perspectives on a certain phenomenon (Patton, 1987). "Focus groups not only encourage researchers to listen to the voices of those who have been subjugated, they also represent a methodology that is consistent with the particularities and everyday experiences of women of color" (Madriz, 2000, p. 839). Participation in the focus group dialogue was open to all members of the sorority, including the regional member of the Board of Regents who participated in the pilot

study. The focus group served as a as a format for me as the “researcher to observe the interactive processes occurring among participants” (Madriz, 2000, p. 836). At this time, I shared with them my progress, and also my background research. By this time, I also completed the transcription and coding of the interviews (which will be discussed at length in the next chapter), and had a tentative list of themes that emerged from the interview data. Initially, I planned to present my findings to the sorority, and ask for their feedback and perceptions of the themes. While I was preparing my presentation, I felt that my role as an educator, and as an older South Asian woman might influence their ability to give me honest feedback, out of concern for my feelings, and respect for me as an elder. As a result, rather than presenting those themes to the women in the sorority, I facilitated a focus group activity where I brought my interview data in the format of 3 x 5 cards, placed the cards on the center of the floor, and asked the women to engage in the same task that I had done to uncover the emergent themes. Thus, their task was to come up with thematic categories as a group. When they completed this task, I asked them to do a presentation of their results to me, and afterwards, I shared my results with them. The focus group dialogue “heightened the opportunities for participants to decide the direction and content of the discussion” (Madriz, 2000, p.840). I chose this particular method of focus group dialogue, because I feared that if I presented results up front, that the women might not engage in dialogue, or share differences of opinion. In this way, we were able to have a rich discussion about our emergent themes driven by the women in the sorority, rather than by me.

Triangulation

The combined processes of interviewing, participant-observation, and focus group dialogue served as a triangulation of data collection methods to ensure the reliability of the data collected. “The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a

framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms” (Patton, 1980, p. 205). Consequently, the individual interviews, continual interaction with the women in the sorority, and the focus group dialogue served as overlapping sources of insight into the sorority, on the terms of the participants. Moreover, a triangulated data collection process decreased the potential for misconceptions, misrepresentations, or misinterpretations on my part as a researcher. Ultimately, my commitment as a researcher was to center the women of Kappa Phi Gamma as the font of knowledge and truth in this study. “A postmodern psychology does not treat people as interchangeable, modernist specimen; instead, it treats study participants as unique individuals who are meaning creators and choice makers” (Uba, 2002, p. 138). Taking heed of Uba’s point, I wanted the women to feel ownership of, to have an active role in this research process, and to be at the forefront as creators of their own meaning.

Data Analysis

The theoretical grounding of this study is based in feminist standpoint theories—specifically through a Black feminist epistemology and a Chicana feminist epistemology. With these epistemological approaches as the foundation of this study, I then sought out the appropriate framework needed to carry out the study. The purpose of this study was to identify the effects of a South Asian American sorority on the racial/ethnic identity development of South Asian American women. Of the various methodological approaches, the ethnographic case study offered the necessary infrastructure to conduct the study. With the case, or unit of analysis being a South Asian interest sorority, and the data collection process developed through an ethnographic lens, I gathered data needed to shed light on the research questions posed.

In this study, I used a grounded theory approach to analyze, and subsequently make meaning of the data generated through the interview transcriptions. “Grounded theory methods specify analytic strategies, not data collection methods” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 514). This approach served as the analytic approach needed to pan out emergent themes from the data. After the interviews were transcribed, they were printed on cardstock, for further analysis. I scanned through these cards to familiarize myself with the data. I then began the process of open coding, and through the analysis and organization of the note cards, conceptual categories were generated. The open coding process allowed me to organize the data for further, deeper analysis (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515). Next, through axial coding, the thematic categories were linked with the repeating sub-topics, and further analysis was done to understand the inter-relatedness of the thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 126). These thematic categories, representing phenomena, inevitably shed light on the answers to the research questions posed in this study. Finally, through selective coding, the data were further integrated and refined to reveal the “recognized relationships” among the thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 144).

Trustworthiness

Because this research was framed as an ethnographic case study, it is important to note that this study was not a quest for universal truths. “Because intertextual knowledge is inherently unstable, discontinuous, changing, and constantly reconstructed, postmodern investigations search for multiple, temporal, unstable truths rather than *the* truth” (Uba, 2002, p. 33). This study is situated in a specific organization, within a specific community, within a college setting, etc. Consequently, this research inquiry focuses on the individual narratives generated through the interview processes, the collective

narrative of the sorority, and emergent themes that are consistent throughout these narratives.

It is intended to introduce narratives that have not had an amplified voice within an academic space. “The ‘formal’ scholarship on the topic of South Asian and Asian American campus groups is scarce” (Gupta, 1998, p. 127). As a researcher, I made a commitment to reciprocity and making this research study a collaborative and shared process and product for future readers. Additionally, I also made a direct and conscious effort to use accessible language within this study. “Specific events and actual personal encounters are reported rather than composite typifications of events and characters. Such an extensive use of ordinary language narrative practices makes the story very accessible to non-academic readers” (Foley, 1998, p.112). I wanted my research to be an accessible product for not only academic scholars, but for college students seeking to understand identity development.

Limitations

Strauss and Corbin point out that “The grounded theorist’s analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. The story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522). No research process is without bias. As the data were interpreted and presented through the lens of the researcher, the sheer human element posed as a limitation to the study. As the “story teller,” I must acknowledge the potential for my bias as a researcher to have an impact on the interpretation and analysis of data. Alternatively, given my insider status as a South Asian American woman who is researching a South Asian American sorority, “there is great advantage in being an ‘insider’ who could blend fully into the specific cultural environment” (Rayaprol, 1997, p. 54). By spending over two years building rapport, trust, and relationships with the

women of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, I was able to gain deeper access into the voices and experiences of the sisterhood.

Additionally, as with any single case study, this research study reflected one organization, on one college campus, with a specific population. The results of this inquiry were certainly limited to the specific population studied, and consequently limited in transferability to other campuses with differing demographics, within different regions, etc. One of my primary goals in this study, in addition to seeking answers to the research questions, was to contribute to dialogue on Asian American identity development and how this process might be impacted through involvement in a South Asian interest sorority. While the results may not be transferable or generalizeable, they still contributed to a body of research which was limited.

SUMMARY

This chapter provided the methodological infrastructure for the qualitative inquiry into the identity development of South Asian American women. “Ethnography is the analysis of the way in which collective relations between people at large inform what particular persons, considered as historically located subjects, do and say” (Toren, 1996, p. 104). South Asian Americans have been researched minimally, and have thus been marginalized within research relevant to the Asian American community. “One way a postmodern psychology would mitigate a treatment of a group as a generic people would be to engage and distinguish a wide variety in that group and de-center privileged subgroups. In studies of Asian Americans, for example, psychologists might ask ‘What would we learn if [South Asian] Americans were regarded as prototypical Asian Americans rather than only as another Asian American group?’” (Uba, 2002, p. 52). This study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on Asian American identity development.

The following chapters offer an in-depth look into the data and emergent themes of this qualitative inquiry. In Chapter four, the data analysis process and outcomes on a more detailed level are presented and emergent themes are explored. Finally, in Chapter five, further discussion is offered recommendations for future research and recommendations are offered for practitioners within the arena of higher education.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Outcomes

As presented in the previous chapters, in this ethnographic case study I sought to explore the impact of involvement within a South Asian interest sorority on South Asian American women. The research questions focal to this study were:

- What factors motivate South Asian American to join a South Asian interest sorority?
- In what ways do joining a South Asian interest sorority impact the identity development of South Asian American women?

In Chapter three, I presented the methodological design of this qualitative study. Using a triangulation of data collection methods- individual interviews, participant observation, and focus group dialogue- my goal was to gather data which would shed light on the impact of involvement in a South Asian interest sorority on South Asian American women. This chapter is presented in three sections. In the first section, I share the data interpretation process, with specific focus on how I arrived at the thematic categories through the data analysis process. The second section is an expanded look at each of the thematic categories. The third section pulls together all of the thematic categories and summarizes the chapter. My objective for this chapter is to share the story of Kappa Phi Gamma as shared through the voices of the participants of this study.

DATA INTERPRETATION

As introduced in Chapter 3, I applied a grounded theory approach to analyze the data gathered in this study. After I transcribed the interviews, I printed out the transcripts on cardstock paper. Through a modified line-by-line analysis, I cut the cardstock into smaller cards, allowing each card to represent a single concept. This process, referred to as “open coding” allowed me to “experience” the data in a different manner. I continued

with the open coding by placing similar concept cards in piles, or thematic categories. Scheurich warns that “The decontextualized interview text which is transformed through the coding process becomes that from which the conventional researcher constructs her story. The bricks of the construction are the reductive monads of meaning, coded in categories in the transcript. These bricks are formed, however, from a mold that is then shaped from the researcher’s conscious and unconscious assumptions and orientations” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 63). Considering this caveat, I recorded the thematic categories which emerged through the open coding process, and repeated this process of categorization multiple times. Additionally, realizing that as a researcher, my own assumptions would influence my own interpretation of the results, I also prepared for the focus group dialogue, hoping that the participants of the study would also hold me accountable for my own potential limitations.

After I completed the open coding of the data, I arranged for a focus group dialogue activity with the women in the sorority, Focus groups are beneficial as a research method for several reasons: 1) The multiple voices of the participants limits the power/control of the researcher; 2) An unstructured facilitation process could potentially minimize, if not completely eliminate, the researcher’s prejudices; 3) The focus group allows the participants to become primary architects of meaning that they attribute to the data (Madriz, 2000). Before we engaged in any dialogue, I asked the women to participate in a group activity with me. I briefly explained the open coding process, and asked them to code the data and develop their own thematic categories. Beyond my very simple explanation of the coding process, I did not offer any more instruction or advice about how to organize the concept cards.

Due to the large number of cards, the women decided to break up into 3 smaller groups, and roughly divided the stack of cards into thirds, distributing a stack to each

group. Within each group, they began to read the cards individually, sharing with one another their ideas about potential thematic categories. Through a collaborative process, the women developed thematic categories based on their own interpretation of the concept cards. Upon completing this activity in small groups, the entire group of women consolidated their findings, and came up with a final list of thematic categories. After The Sisterhood presented their final list of thematic categories, I shared with them my thematic categories. The table below offers a comparison of the thematic category list compiled by me, and by The Sisterhood.

Table 1: Comparison of Thematic Categories

<i>Comparison of Thematic Categories</i>	
Generated by Mamta	Generated by Kappa Phi Gamma
Leadership/Professional Development	Leadership/Professionalism
Recognition of a South Asian Identity	Fitting In: South Asian vs. East Asian
Breaking Stereotypes of South Asian Women	Breaking Stereotypes/ Changing Perceptions
Sense of Belonging	Finding a Home/Family
Positive Self Identity	Pride of Self
Positive Relationships with South Asian Women	Building a Bond with other South Asian Women
	Diversity of South Asian Americans

At this point, many women pointed out how similar our thematic categories were, and additionally, as a group, The Sisterhood had an additional category, named “Diversity of South Asians.” We then engaged in further dialogue on the specific thematic categories, and the participants added clarification to the meanings of these categories, along with quotations from the interview data which best reflected each of

these categories. After further discussion, the group came to a consensus about how they perceived similarities and differences in the categories I generated versus their categories, and how they wanted these categories represented. They saw my categories to be more general in nature, and thus opted to incorporate their categories as sections within the broader categories which was a composite of our shared observations. Any re-naming of categories was initiated by the group. The following table reflects the categories:

Table 2: Composite of Thematic Categories

<i>Composite of Thematic Categories</i>	
Leadership/Professional Development	
Positive Self Image/Pride of Self	
Breaking Stereotypes of South Asian Women/Changing Perceptions	
Sense of Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Bond with other South Asian Women • Finding a Home/Family
Ownership of a South Asian Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitting In: South Asians and East Asians • Diversity of South Asian Americans

THEMATIC CATEGORIES

Focus group processes ensures “that precedence is given to the participants’ hierarchies of importance, their own words and language, and the frameworks they use to describe their own experiences” (Madriz, 200, p. 842). In honor of the voices I write about in this study, I shall now expand upon the thematic categories as named by the women in the sorority, using portions of their interview narratives to elucidate these emergent themes. As a result of their group activity, the women identified five major thematic categories: Leadership/Professional Development, Positive Self Image/Pride of

Self, Breaking Stereotypes/Changing Perceptions, Sense of Belonging, and Ownership of a South Asian Identity. In this section, we take look into the founding of Kappa Phi Gamma, as well as a closer look at each of the thematic categories. To honor and protect the confidentiality of the participants I used pseudonyms to present their voices through the interview narratives.

The Founding of Kappa Phi Gamma

Kappa Phi Gamma was founded by a group of 27 women at The University of Texas at Austin in 1998. The collective vision of the founders, was to create an empowering space for South Asian American women:

At UT there was a void for South Asian American women- there was nothing there that united us. I am not saying that Kappa Phi Gamma unites ALL South Asian women, by no means does it do that. But we wanted a place where South Asian women of different interests to come together and have a common base that they may not have had otherwise.

Prior to the precipitation of Greek letter organizations within the South Asian community at UT, most students who sought out other South Asians usually joined the Indian Students' Association, ISA, which even presently, is recognized as the largest registered student organization at The University. Echoing the desire for a specific space for South Asian women, Juhi recounted:

I came here as a freshman so then I got really involved in ISA. Because I felt like I wanted more, I got more involved in ISA and became good friends with the officers. It was great, it was awesome, but at the same time I still felt like there was something missing and as I got older I realized what I wanted. I wanted to have a really good, strong South Asian group of girls to hang out with, to do stuff with, and I felt like ISA didn't give me that.

Another founder, Helen, shared a similar vision but also added the need for an organization that saw South Asian women for all of their qualities:

What I wanted to bring was skills of leadership, professionalism, etiquette, résumés, interviewing, speaking skills, and you have this extra diversity and

culture, and if you can get the best of both worlds, and that is what I was looking for. I thought it is not just your White women that can be President of your student council, you can learn all these skills in something like this and by the way we have a cultural aspect and to me this was a great idea to tie it together.

What is interesting to note about Helen's remark, is not only the desire for leadership and professional development specifically geared toward the South Asian female community, but also the perception of White women having the inherent ability to be leaders. Essentially, Helen made the remark based on her observation through experiences in school, noting the presence of White women in leadership positions, and the lack of South Asian American women in leadership positions. She further added, "so when I think of a leader, unfortunately I don't see that many South Asian women leaders." Ultimately, the women felt the need to develop a space that would fulfill the gaps they perceived in their college experience.

As a result, in 1998, "The founders envisioned a sorority built around 8 principles: character, leadership, scholarship, sisterhood, service, womanhood, culture, and self. Realizing the quality of The Sisterhood could never be compromised, the founders' every endeavor thereafter was directed toward fostering these 8 principles and establishing a solid foundation for the future before embarking on plans for expansion" (Kappa Phi Gamma website). The founders built Kappa Phi Gamma upon these 8 principles, and proceeded to share this vision with the South Asian woman population at The University.

Leadership/Professional Development

Several of the women indicated that their primary reason for joining the sorority was for leadership and professional development. In discussion with Nimi about why she joined the sorority, she reflected upon her first impression of the sorority after an information session:

Kappa Phi Gamma presented itself in such a professional and classy way from a first glance. From first glance I saw Kappa Phi Gamma and I was like wow these girls are very professional. They are on TAPC (Texas Asian Panhellenic Council) and they know what they are doing...Then I started learning what Kappa Phi Gamma did and they are just so involved in everything. To handle so many responsibilities, and be a part of a group that not only did service, but ran the organization like a business in a lot of ways whereas other organizations did not have that balance of experiences. I am a big advocate of being well rounded.

From first impressions, to general sentiment of the outcome of the leadership experiences as a result of being a member of Kappa Phi Gamma, all of the participants who were interviewed attributed their leadership development to their involvement in the sorority. Sheeba pointed out:

I think because I had a couple leadership positions before, I think I had the groundwork [to handle leadership positions]. But the sorority gave me more of a forum to develop these skills. To me, more of myself came out. I always tell everybody in the whole world that I landed my jobs and my internships because of my experience in my sorority. I've tried to think of other ones to have a diversity in my interviews but everything that I can think of, because we go through so many situations in the sorority, whether it is financial or leadership and taking initiative, working out problems, dealing with x, y, and z; all of the typical interview questions I felt like I got out of the sorority. Because to me, that is why I say I barely remember life before the sorority, because maybe I had the groundwork as being a leader and I had a couple positions, but the sorority gave me a forum where I wasn't just in a position, I had to create a position, I had to create organization and I had to deal with 20-some-odd women who were Indian and they came from different backgrounds and had some of them had different skills and different weaknesses. So I think some of the things that I learned is [taking initiative] and how to deal with so many people. In my role in the sorority as Internal VP, that was the absolute perfect for me. How I managed a group of 30 people in the meeting, where do we cut discussion, where we continue. Because of that, I am actually doing organizational development in school. What I want to do is corporate recruiting and corporate training and things like that. So recently this year when I went back to school, that is how it felt. I like doing the sorority work and I liked the VP Internal, what is that called in the real world? To me it really shaped what I wanted to do for my career, is I wanted to do what I did when I was an officer, what was that called. So to me that is why I can't remember life before the sorority.

Again, the sorority was credited as the forum through which South Asian women had access to opportunities that allowed them to develop or enhance themselves

professionally. I had the opportunity to experience the high expectations of professionalism through my attending many of Kappa Phi Gamma's events. Within the sorority, there are understood expectations of each sister. I noticed that at each of their weekly general body meetings, all women dressed in business attire. When I asked about this practice, I was told that this was a practice which taught the women to focus on the business matters of the sorority, to communicate effectively, and to also always be cognizant of one's presentation. Additionally, regardless of the event, whether it be their own information session, or a program being sponsored by another group, the women of Kappa Phi Gamma were always prepared and ready for any situation. Even their public speaking skills were polished- without stumbling, flaws, or insecurity. The commitment to professional development within The Sisterhood was really firm. Simran, also reiterating the sentiments of her fellow sorority sisters, added:

I'll tell you forewarning that I'm one of those 180s. Not as far as one of those things where I went from really unprofessional to now I can do this, but as far as I cannot even tell you, but I completely changed. Before I walked in there, for one, I had leadership titles and positions, but I was not really the leader. I had those cases in high school where my advisers in high school were really doing everything and I was like okay, I'm President. I was never a leader. I never tapped into all of my strengths like I could have.

Simran compared her encounter of a superficial leadership experience in high school to the experiences she had in college. What is also interesting to note, is how she, as well as the rest of the participants, spoke of the sorority. Her feelings are unmistakable through her further discussion of the leadership development she gained through the sorority:

I saw that I was capable of so many things, and so many girls have potential, but there is nobody in this world that is going to take the time out to pull it out of you and say that this is what you are capable of, you know, show it, prove it to yourself and that actually happened. [Women in the sisterhood] just said hey, [Simran], this is what you are capable of, and you are going to show it to me, show us, and show yourself-and I just had to think to myself, am I? Well, let's

see if I am, and all of a sudden, I was capable of so much more than I realized. Once you realize what you can do like that is the whole other level of confidence in yourself.

It is at this point where the connections between and among the thematic categories also became evident. Through their voices, it was very clear that the leadership experiences through the sorority offered professional development unique to the women in the sorority. The discovery of leadership within, naturally led to the development of an internal confidence of one's own abilities. This idea leads into the next theme- Positive Self Image/Pride of Self.

Positive Self-Image/Pride of Self:

Perhaps one of the most powerful themes revealed by the women in the sisterhood was the impact of sorority involvement on their self-image. When asked about changes they noticed in themselves before joining the sorority, and after having been a member of the sorority, the positive perception of self was a universal response. Kajol reflected upon how insecure she was before Kappa Phi Gamma:

When I came to UT I used to walk by the West Mall with my head down, you know, not knowing what to do and I would be like oh, I don't want to see any Indian people. Oh, I was very shy, and I had a lot of trouble carrying conversations with people, but because of Kappa Phi Gamma I can pretty much say with total confidence that I can carry a conversation with almost anybody now, I am not scared about approaching people I don't know anymore.

Oftentimes, self-image was directly associated with feeling different- whether it was cultural practice, food, or even physical appearance. Ayesha, recounting her experiences growing up, shared the confusion and insecurity she felt within her peer group in high school:

I just felt so insecure around my friends- and just weird. I always wondered why I was darker than all of my friends, and even little minor things like how our food smelled different, or how my family did different things. I just felt that people saw it all as weird. That is the stuff that brought me down and made me feel

insecure and not part of the norm and joining KPhiG after made me feel like our life is also normal, and that everything I grew up with was fine, and just as normal as anyone else.

Priyanka shed more light on this particular source of insecurity. She talked about not being able to be proud of her full identity:

I don't think we really pull from our identity or experiences that we have as South Asian Americans growing up. You know like we compartmentalized our identities: in school, it is me and my white friends; and at home or at my Indian functions it is me and my brown people. I remember the first time in school I brought pictures of me like doing garba-raas, or the first time you bring Indian food to school or things like that, you know it is trauma!! But it is like I think first of all I am going to be embarrassed and everyone is like "oh, what's that yellow stuff you are eating?" All that kind of, you know, the normal crap. Oh, it smells weird. At a certain point, we need to be confident and this is my food, this is what I eat, and it takes good and you're missing out on it because you haven't experienced it, and I don't know if everyone really gets it.

This feeling of "embarrassment" associated with one's cultural/ethnic identity was a prevalent source of insecurity, and a feeling of being "less than" within mainstream spaces. Ayesha summarized this thought, as she described herself by saying "[Ayesha] before Kappa Phi Gamma was a very insecure, unconfident person. One of the reasons I felt this way was that I always felt that I was on the outside, not just culturally or but also how I looked with my appearance, like my skin color and knowing I was different, which are two big factors." Essentially, all of the interviewees attested to Kappa Phi Gamma as a space where their identities were affirmed as being normal and a source of their strength, rather than a source of insecurity. This notion was best captured by Sheeba's analysis of Kappa Phi Gamma:

K Phi G really lets you appreciate your negatives. It makes you realize that criticism is really constructive criticism, and sometimes it takes a little struggling to get there, and it takes some time to get there. This is so different from focusing on your negatives to bring you down, but really we empower ourselves by pulling out our strengths from things that we have been told are negative our whole life.

Sheeba's words truly reflect upon the sorority's commitment to assuring the empowerment of its membership- but what is also revealed in her words and in the testimonies of other sisters, is the idea of re-examining the messages that they have been given about themselves as South Asians, and as women, and drawing strength from those messages, rather than internalizing the labels placed upon them. This reflection also added clarity to the recurrence of the following theme, which involves breaking stereotypes of South Asian women.

Breaking Stereotypes/Changing Perceptions

Many insecurities associated with being a South Asian American woman stemmed from an internalization of common stereotypes associated with South Asian people, and specifically women. As our discussions during the interview addressed stereotypes associated with South Asian female identity, many of the interviews became very emotional, and many times, the women I interviewed began to cry as this subject emerged. Moushmi, a founder, emphatically shared different stereotypes she felt were placed upon South Asian American women:

South Asian women are supposed to be quiet and shy and submissive, you know, they are not supposed to go out and have fun. They are not supposed to have their own organization and run things on campus. They are not supposed to have their own relations with other organizations. We are about womanhood and representing what women- South Asian women are. First of all one of the goals of Kappa Phi Gamma is to change that stereotype that exists. We are about representing what South Asian women are and making more people aware about that. By forming a sorority and sisterhood you can connect with each other and through each other, you have that support system to help you communicate that to the outside world.

Many of the interviewees offered statements that resonated with this emotion. The recurring perception of South Asian women as shy, quiet, submissive was a common point of concern and internal struggle. Waheeda, originally had no interest in joining the sorority. As an athlete and a very active student in high school, she was drawn to Kappa

Phi Gamma because they weren't like "typical Desi women." She further added that she thought that people viewed South Asian women as "innocent, naïve, and sometimes ignorant." Ultimately, Waheeda joined the sisterhood because she not only had a space where she connected with other South Asian women, but also a space that actively worked to dismantle the stereotype of South Asian women as weak, submissive, and invisible.

Through our discussion, Kajol, one of the younger members also implicitly addressed the notion of being treated as a 'perpetual foreigner,' especially in reference to the sorority's interaction with other fraternities and sororities on campus of different racial/ethnic background:

I think when we do things like C.A.R.E. Week or participating in other people's service projects, or do have mixers with other organizations, they do see that South Asian women aren't maybe what other people stereotype them to be, because they have this certain set stereotype of them which is this maybe shy girl who is maybe from a foreign country. They may not realize that maybe many of us are born here. You know? Like we are not really American.

The sorority serves as a space of empowerment to break these stereotypes not for the sisters of Kappa Phi Gamma, but also for the students who interact with them—especially students who are in other fraternities, sororities, and other student organizations in general. What arised as a source of concern for some of the participants, however, is the deep personal responsibility that the sisters felt to represent South Asian women in a manner which challenged these stereotypes. Priyanka, added:

I feel that there is a misconstrued perception of South Asian women in general. I do feel a lot of pressure in that I have to represent well. I want to change that perception that a lot of people have and so sometimes it is really difficult to not be constantly thinking about it. Like a lot of people think of us as maybe weak or nondominant or not as involved in the community or different things like that and that is really not what it is.

Kajol reinforced this idea of personal responsibility to break stereotypes, and took this idea further:

All of these things, sisterhood and whatever else, they need to be fully felt within us and shown within us and practiced within us, and I think that in that sense we do have that and we have that necessity to show other people that this is what South Asian women can do. We can be independent, and we can get these amazing jobs that a lot of our sisters have done, and we can be successful and be getting into amazing graduate programs and whatever else, and I think that that is really important for South Asian women to understand when they get into college that so many more doors can open up for us, but we have to open doors for the others that follow- there is just too much to be done.

Similarly, Nargis reflected on this topic, adding the dimension of living in the United States post 9-11:

It is not hard to pick us out, and especially at this point in the United States, in this corrupt time, in this time of great upheaval. I think that we have a responsibility to be, because a lot of us are Muslim, and we have a responsibility to South Asians to be ambassadors of the South Asian community.

In many ways, Kajol, Priyanka, and Nargis's testimonies reflected the deep personal responsibility that the sorority as a collective feels towards breaking common stereotypes of South Asian women and serving as positive images of the South Asian community. I learned from others, though, that stereotypes of South Asian women do not only come from people who are not of South Asian descent, but also from South Asian men. In fact, some of the labeling of the women done by South Asian men often made progress difficult for the sorority. Juhi noted:

And our guys make it worse because they think that because they expect South Asian woman to be submissive, and the woman in Kappa Phi Gamma are not, that we are somehow not normal. So then they think we are "bitches" when we make independent decisions. I don't know what they expect really, but it is not this. It is not these strong, independent women that are out there and making a name for ourselves because really we are, and to people that is weird to them.

While the struggle of continually challenging the stereotypes placed upon them from non-South Asian people may have been frustrating, many women felt hurt and

betrayed by South Asian men, who stereotyped them. Nargis offered insight into the complexities of this situation:

I think it is more, no, I'm NOT going to stand behind [ANY] man. Sometimes I don't even need one. I'm going to stand next to him, as an equal. And I am very sure of what I believe in. Actually, I think that threatens our guys. They are not used to us being this way. It is like they expect us to be old-school like our moms, and we are just not that way. What hurts is that the guys, especially the ones in the [South Asian] fraternities judge us, and then it is hard to connect with the community because it affects our reputation.

The internal/external stereotyping of South Asian women offers unique challenges for the women in the sorority, and because of the heavy social interaction associated with sorority involvement through service projects, mixers, and community events, the women of Kappa Phi Gamma are confronted with these stereotypes more directly as a result of their group membership. Though a source of frustration for the women, it is worthy of note that this process led to many group discussions on this particular subject, and an opportunity for healing dialogue among the women. Essentially, rather than being outcasted from the community, the women in the sorority used their relationships with one another to withstand the stereotypes, and not succumb to reverting to societal expectations of what it means to be a South Asian woman.

Sense of Belonging

When asked about why they decided to join a South Asian interest sorority, specifically, there were two major reasons that the women revealed to me. These reasons, both referred to the broader idea of finding a sense of belonging. After discussion in the focus group, the women felt that these categories were connected, but needed separated discussion based on their analysis of the concept cards.

Building a Bond with other South Asian Women

This motif was consistent throughout the interview narratives regardless of whether or not women lived in communities with heavy South Asian representation (like Houston or Dallas/Fort Worth) or whether they came from smaller towns in Texas where there was little to no South Asian community. As we talked about involvement in college student organizations, Meena articulated a very specific goal:

I guess I was not really involved culturally with myself. I never got to meet that many Indian people. I guess coming here it was kind of a goal of mine to meet a lot of people from my background and to understand what it was like, and Kappa Phi Gamma is just one way to do that.

Anjali further compared her life at home prior to college to her current experiences. Even though she grew up surrounded by a South Asian community, with her parents involved in the community, she commented that she was never able to achieve the depth of the relationships she was able to build through Kappa Phi Gamma:

Even when I went to high school, and all my entire life, until I came to UT I was never close to any South Asian women, like ever. I mean I have family friends and I'm sure I was acquainted with them, but I never had any close South Asian relations. I came to UT and I met some of the girls from Kappa Phi Gamma and there is just this connection that you feel with other people that are South Asian; I felt a connection with these girls and I could talk about things that I couldn't talk about with other people. Because our background was different than everybody else's. Our cultures are so similar and helps us connect and we can be friends on a different level, like sisters on a different level.

After each weekly meeting, The Sisterhood had a practice of passing around what the women refer to as the "share jar." This tradition was incorporated into the sorority's practice to strengthen the bond and connection among the sisters. Basically, the jar was passed around the room, and women would place a quarter in the jar, and then share any thought they wished the rest of her sisters to hear. Whether it was a happy moment, a sad moment, a critical moment, or just a recounting of one's day, this activity accomplished many goals. Ultimately, this practice was put into place so that the sisters would learn to

actively listen to one another on a personal level. It also taught women to communicate clearly, and also to be comfortable with voicing their thoughts, emotions, and opinions. The accumulated money in the jar would then be used for a sisterhood event- or a bonding event among the women in the sorority at a later time. I noticed that this practiced allowed many of the women to get to know each other in very powerful ways. Also, this process facilitated healthy communication- which is usually not a common practice among South Asian women, who typically internalize their emotions. The space to bond with other South Asian women was clearly present in my observations of The Sisterhood.

Many women specifically sought a space where they could relate to other women on a cultural level. Mala touched upon her desire for a cultural connection:

Just being able to talk to people, your peers, about stuff like Bollywood movies, Indian food, the way Indian parents are. Cause Indian parents are so stereotypical, and Indian functions and celebrating Diwali with your friends; you know, I've never done that before. So all of that kind of stuff is something I got out of Kappa Phi Gamma because I met people from my background that did the same things I did, and it was always strange to my friends in high school because, they were very respectful of it, but they never understood it. Now there are people who understand it and already know it.

Similarly, Saira referenced connecting, and developing relationships with other South Asian women.

I wanted to be with South Asians in the fact that I can speak my language, my native language Urdu, and like maybe two-thirds of the sorority will understand. We have basic movies that we watch together, and at UT, I've already had a mixture of Americans from other backgrounds, Black, White, Asian, Hispanic- but I didn't have a concentrated area of South Asians and just women, too, which is what I so wanted. There was one time when we were all having dinner one night- and Mamta you were there, remember? Just to be able to put in a DVD and start dancing to Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham- I couldn't do that so freely with any other group of people.

Thinking back to that evening, which was actually a group dinner before the Thanksgiving Break, I did notice a different kind of connection among the women in the

sorority. We ate dinner, and then Saira put in a DVD (a routine pastime among the women), and started assigning dance-roles to all of us. We all proceed to goofily mimic the Bollywood actors and actresses, and the whole evening was full of laughter. While watching movies together may have seemed like a superficial connection, I posit that it is more than the movie that was cherished by the sisters of Kappa Phi Gamma. It was that the feeling that watching their movie of choice, which may be different or odd to others, was “normal” among them, without need for explanation.

Finding a Home/Family

In a similar vein, the notion of a “family” or a “home” away from home also emerged in our discussion. This section, slightly different from seeking specific relationships with South Asian women, focused more on connecting with a group of people in general, and having a support system to rely upon. In a very powerful testimony, Simran recounted:

I specifically recall the beginning of the second semester spring of my freshman year, I was still in a limbo what exactly I wanted to do. It was a Saturday night, and it was 2:00 in the morning, and I was lying in bed, and who goes to bed at 2:00 in the morning on a Saturday night...that is #1 sign that I am not doing much. I was in bed, and all of a sudden I started crying like I was a bawling to myself, and I was trying to keep quiet because my roommate was sleeping and I didn't want to keep her up at night. I was just bawling to myself because I never felt a wave of loneliness like that, and I just realized that I only have maybe a couple of people on this campus. I've met a lot of people, but they are not really my close friends. Of course that takes time, but I felt like I didn't belong to anything, I didn't know what I could belong to. I didn't know how I could ever fit in, and I just felt lost, and I remember that.

If one were to encounter Simran on campus, you would never know that she ever felt this way. Her story reminded me that so many students who we think may have adjusted to college life because their grades were good, and they seemed okay externally, may have been looking for something more- something to connect them with themselves and others. During the focus group activity, it was also fascinating to see the discussion

that occurred around the concept cards which shared Simran's words. Many women connected with her statement, even affirming it as they also began sharing their own stories with one another.

The sense of belonging that comes with being a part of a group that serves as a support system was clearly expressed through Nimi's impression of the Kappa Phi Gamma:

I love having that close-knit of friends and just having that support system that lacks when you are so far from family. So that is why I love it. I sometimes think what would I be like if I hadn't met it and if I had never done it, but I will guarantee that I have grown 100% by joining it. I am completely different, completely sure of myself, and completely part of a group rather than alone, and I don't know if that is just in my mind that I'm part of a group, but it gives me such a security net that I would not change for the life of me.

This sentiment was a common thread throughout the interviews. Ayesha explained her feelings toward the sorority in the following manner:

Kappa Phi Gamma means so much to me, but I think the best way to describe it is love. I don't love a lot of things. I like a lot of things, but it is something I am so passionate about. It is something I am so, so passionate about, like I've been passionate about things but not to this extent and there is not some ultimate benefit like getting into med school or being a doctor or getting good grades, so there is not an ultimate tangible benefit. The benefit is now and forever, and I don't know, it is something I am just so passionate about, and people cannot see just how amazing it is; amazing love, happy, all of these things that run through my head, so I cannot pinpoint it. Home. Home is a really good word for it because it is seriously like where ever you are, you see your K Phi G sister and you can at least know that someone is there for you no matter what, and I just look at it as a lot of comfort.

Again, this quotation was chosen by the women who participated in the focus group discussion, because it resonated with so many of their feelings toward the sorority based on their own individual experiences.

Ownership of a South Asian Identity

Originally, I titled this thematic category “Recognition of a South Asian Identity,” but as we developed our composite list of themes, the feedback was brought up that the term, “recognition,” almost implied that the women in the sorority were not aware of their identities as South Asians. Because they did not want to give credence to that assumption, they offered the term “ownership,” to suggest that through the sorority, South Asian women had the means to claim their identities with pride, rather than “selling out,” or rejecting their identities as South Asian women. This theme yielded two major points of discussion.

Fitting In: South Asian vs. East Asian

In the interviews, I spent a considerable amount of time investigating why these particular women chose Kappa Phi Gamma over the other sorority options on campus. All women, with the exception of one interviewee, mentioned that they had never considered joining a sorority at all before encountering Kappa Phi Gamma. With further discussion and clarification, they also pointed out that their original impression of a sorority was based on the stereotype of the “White sororities,” or Panhellenic sororities. A few women referenced the African American sororities and Latina sororities as being more aligned in vision with Kappa Phi Gamma, and they noted the differences in purpose for sororities geared toward women of color versus Panhellenic sororities which focused more on social development. Again, all of these women, with the exception one interviewee, happened to stumble upon the sorority once they found out about Asian American sororities, and the Texas Asian Panhellenic Council (TAPC), a council which served as the governing body for three Asian American sororities. The one interviewee who did actually actively seek a sorority experience was pleasantly surprised to find a South Asian interest sorority- but she was the only person among all of the interviewees

who actually did research into all sorority options available to her before she decided upon membership into Kappa Phi Gamma.

Through the next series of interview questions, I aimed to gain an understanding of why these women chose Kappa Phi Gamma over any of the other Asian American sororities that also existed at UT. Juhi, a founder, shed light upon the founders' rationale for the creation of Kappa Phi Gamma, rather than joining other existing Asian American sororities:

The big blanket term Asian American I think, a lot of people consider that towards those who are of East Asian decent. And for whatever reason Indian Americans, Pakistani Americans fell through the gap and got clumped into that group, which is why kind of in the process I felt like if there was a separate Asian American and South Asian American identity. And because of that, it seemed that we didn't feel like we could fit in with that or anything with it.

Helen, also a founder, also used the term 'Asian' as synonymous with 'East Asian,' as evident in her thoughts about founding the sorority:

It did not even cross my mind at all to join an Asian sorority. To me that was very different. We are obviously, continent-wise, from the same continent. But that could have been African-American to me. I didn't really see a connection that I personally related to. So to me, K-D-Phi (predominantly East Asian American sorority) is the same as A-K-A (historically African American sorority) in my eyes. So when I founded the sorority, South Asian meant something very different than Asian, and it didn't cross my mind to put those two together.

The women I interviewed had a clear understanding that they were considered "Asian American," by the University, and they did not vocalize any concern with that identity label, however, in terms of an intuitive and unspoken sense of belonging, Nutan's thoughts on Asian American identity revealed a feeling of difference between South Asian women and East Asian women:

Asian is closer to South Asian than like Caucasian, but I still think there is a difference between South Asian and Asian. I'm not saying that all Asian people are the same either. But for us it is a completely different culture, language, history, everything. Different enough to notice. I think I am very much into

South Asian stuff like movies, food, and stuff, and I wouldn't have been able to share that in an Asian sorority like I do in K-Phi-G.

Waheeda, building upon this sentiment, also shared with me that while all Asian Americans at some level probably grew up feeling 'different,' that the other Asian American sororities did not offer her what she needed:

You know their culture is still different, but they understand what it is like to come from a different background, but other than that, it is like there are still so many differences. So in just looking at that, I could just never picture myself in that type of an Asian-interest sorority. I guess that is really the only difference is that they are different than us in the sense that they have different customs and stuff.

Many of the interviewees emphasized the importance of working coalitionally with the other Asian American sororities, and through Texas Asian Panhellenic Council, Kappa Phi Gamma actively supports Asian American awareness efforts and causes throughout the school year. Examples of this commitment are seen through programming such as "Women's Empowerment Week," a program created to promote awareness of Asian American women through educational workshops, panel discussions with Asian American woman leaders, and discussion. Additionally, Kappa Phi Gamma as an organization makes it a point to voice concerns to the University administration about issues relevant to students of color, and also the invisibility of Asian American student representation on University committees. Last year, one of the officers of Kappa Phi Gamma expressed her concern about Asian American students not being invited to participate on search committees, or even task forces on campus diversity initiatives to UT's President, Dr. Larry Faulkner.

Diversity of South Asian Americans

Borrowing from Shankar and Srikanth's use of the term "felt identity," through this study it was very clear that while the South Asian American women who participated

in this study broadly associated themselves as ‘Asian American,’ this category was not an identity that they “felt” referred to them. The term “South Asian American” has been a term that they more closely identify with, although even this term is a politicized construct. What was fascinating to witness through these interviews, however, was the recognition of the diversity within the South Asian community, and also the recognition that the differing histories of South Asian people meant a different set of values within the community based on their home culture norms. When I asked about what it meant to be of ‘South Asian’ descent, I received a wide variety of answers. Helen responded:

So South Asian to me was more, anyone familiar with Indian culture, and I know it is hard because there are other countries and India is the biggest one, but it was more similar food, similar languages. The whole idea of different religions, I’m actually personally Catholic, but the whole Hindu side of it. People that wore similar clothing; it was that Indian culture, anything that kind of related to that Indian culture, to me was South Asian.

Mala offered different insight:

South Asian identity is still very vague. It is still very like choose your own adventure. We can kind of claim our own identity in the way we want, so I shouldn’t force upon this on you and say this is your South Asian identity, however I do feel that people should know simple things like what constitutes South Asia, you know South Asian American female leaders, and South Asian American leaders, South Asian prominent females in the world, you know, things like that. Other things, like should you be able to speak Hindi, you know things like that, that is your choice and your prerogative. But I don’t think that defines South Asian identity and we should be inclusive of South Asian culture. I mean it cannot be just the awareness of our brown skin where we don’t even know your roots either, or we don’t know where we come from, or how we got to where we are, physically, culturally, politically. It is all about a balance of these things, and we all choose our own path.

Mala’s thought processes reflected a deep introspection of her own identity, and also her own experiences as a student leader. Her thoughts were also impacted by her continual study of South Asian identity scholarship. Other women in the sorority, saw

Kappa Phi Gamma as a place where they learned about South Asian cultures and values different from their own. Julie noted:

Kappa Phi Gamma is probably the best thing that has ever happened to me in my life. It is definitely a very positive thing. First of, because me personally because I was very uneducated about South Asians, like I always used to use the term Indian as a coin term, and I find myself saying that and so now I try to catch myself because not everybody that is brown is Indian and it is not like that, and it definitely brings us closer together as a sisterhood because it makes each of us different. Coming from religious backgrounds, we have a different view on things that we do spiritually. It provides a different perspective on everything we do and it brings us closer together because people are more unique and we have an easy time bonding. As people from like Bangladesh, Pakistan, all over India, all sorts of countries in South Asia it is just really amazing that we can all come together and also learn from each other.

Within The Sisterhood, even in official sorority events, and also informal gatherings, I noted that the women made it a point to use the term 'South Asian,' and even correct one another if someone used the term 'Indian' or 'Pakistani.' When I asked different women who constituted being 'South Asian,' I received different answers, but it became very clear that the term was used not necessarily because it was the most inclusive term, but that it was the least exclusive term.

Priyanka also noted how much she learned about the diversity of the South Asian community, and further shared that this awareness enabled her to break some of her own stereotypes of other South Asian communities:

So I am definitely a lot more aware of the diversity that can be in the South Asian community. Like Ismaeli Muslims and Islam in general, and like Christianity. Like I didn't understand that there were sects of the Christianity and basically I always used to know there were Christian Indians, but I didn't know what they were like at all because we were always in our Hindu community so that was kind of cool, and it is really nice to learn about other people's backgrounds and customs, and that sort of exchange of ideas and information makes people a lot more tolerant I think, and that is a really good thing to be exposed to those kinds of people because otherwise you just hear, like older Hindu people still are very anti-Islam and they have those sentiments. It is nice to be able to learn on your own and get past those things. Because where you hear it from when you are a little, like from my grandparents and stuff, they lived in Lucknow it is a

predominantly Muslim city, but we are Hindu, so they have all of these buried emotions and stuff, so to hear that...But now, I don't believe those things because I've met these people, and they are not what they say, what my grandparents would say, so I think that is definitely something you get from being in a diverse background.

This particular sense of awareness through involvement in The Sisterhood was recognized by over half of the women who participated in the interviews, and also confirmed through the focus group discussion. The manner in which the women addressed their 'felt identity' as 'South Asians' was intriguing, as they used color to define themselves. Continual reference to themselves as 'brown,' reflected the awareness of their phenotypic differences from other Asian Americans. Many of the narratives shared in this section use the color 'brown' to identify South Asian people, and Mala takes this a step further, connecting their phenotypic appearance to their responsibility as South Asian leaders:

We are a South Asian interest organization, so for me if you are a South Asian interest then you represent the South Asian community at large wherever you go and that is a very diverse community. You can't be like I'm going to take off my brown skin today and be somebody else, you know? Let's face it, we are going to be treated by the color of our skin so we have a responsibility to be aware of as many communities that fall under our identity.

While all women were not at the same place developmentally, nor did all of the women in the sorority share the same opinions, a unique strength of the sorority that I noticed through my observations of the women is that these conversations about identity happened all the time. With each conversation, the women of Kappa Phi Gamma sorority have had the ability to challenge one another and themselves, as well as have dialogue on issues that are typically not discussed.

THE IMPACT OF SORORITY INVOLVEMENT ON SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Through this qualitative inquiry, I was able to develop an understanding of the South Asian interest sorority, Kappa Phi Gamma. The research questions I posed

specifically focused on the factors which motivated South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, and also the impact of sorority involvement on the identity development of South Asian American women. Through the data analysis process, which was a collaborative effort involving the sorority and me, we extracted thematic categories based on the organization of the interview data on concept cards. Following this process, the women who participated in the focus group further organized the thematic categories. This process was accomplished through thorough discussion of the meaning that women assigned to the category names, and a clarification that some categories needed to be further separated into subcategories. The major thematic categories that emerged from this process were Leadership and Professional Development, Positive Self Image/Pride of Self, Breaking Stereotypes and Changing Perceptions of South Asian American women, Sense of Belonging, and the Ownership of a South Asian identity. The remainder of this chapter was dedicated to expanding upon these themes and relaying the meanings that the women of Kappa Phi Gamma attached to these categories based on their narrative voices.

In the final chapter that follows, I provide answers to the research questions by tying together these themes. Through this discussion, I aim to paint a picture of Kappa Phi Gamma sorority, and how it potentially impacts South Asian American women. Additionally, I offer suggestions for future research.

Chapter Five: Affirmations of Identity- Conclusions & Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine whether involvement in a South Asian American sorority impacted the identity development of South Asian American collegiate women. This goal was accomplished using a qualitative methodology which centered the voices and experiences of South Asian American women in Kappa Phi Gamma sorority, a South Asian interest sorority, as the primary agents of knowledge in this study. As reflected in the literature review, research in higher education reflecting Asian American student experiences is lacking. “Despite growing numbers of Asian Americans in higher education, the lack of discussion and research specific to Asian Americans has made it difficult to learn about or provide culturally effective services to these students” (McEwen, et al, 2002, p. 1). Given the diversity of the Asian American community, it is critical for higher education administrators to develop an understanding and sensitivity of issues pertinent to Asian American college students. In this concluding chapter I accomplish three goals. First, I briefly re-introduce the rationale for this study. Second, I revisit the research questions, integrating the research data, to provide an understanding of the role that Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority plays in the identity development of South Asian American women who join the sorority. Finally, I conclude the chapter with observations and recommendations on how this study might be used to better serve Asian Americans in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

In the Spring 2002 volume of *New Directions in Student Services*, the editors pose several very important questions pertaining to Asian American students in higher education. This volume is perhaps one of the most valuable contributions to higher education literature on Asian American student needs. In the Editors’ notes of this

volume, the editors “apply the term Asian American to a highly diverse population encompassing Americans from East Asian and South Asian backgrounds” (McEwen, et al, 2002, p. 1). However, what is interesting to note, is that South Asian American issues are not addressed at all in this volume, nor are there South Asian voices present as contributing authors. As educators, we cannot fully understand the complexity of Asian America without narrative voices from the different ethnic communities that make up Asian America. Within Asian America, and studies about Asian American issues, South Asian Americans are often not included, or they are included in a tokenistic fashion, as reflected by the Spring 2002 volume of *New Directions in Student Services*.

As an advisor to many Asian American student organizations and student leaders, I have also seen how the invisibility of South Asian American students impacts their sense of belonging both within the Asian American community, and also generally as students on a college campus. One of my students, who was not a participant of this study, expressed her pain to me through the following email, after attending an Asian American student leader conference:

I made the mistake of expecting to see an image of ME, somewhere, in an Asian American conference. It's hard for me to verbally articulate my feelings the past few days without wanting to cry. I don't know why this is, I've gone through many "hard times" in life and thru my immigration process. As someone who was sure about her identity (enough to want to pursue a degree in it), I now feel like I don't have one.

It's one thing to be marginalized by older generations, or people that aren't socially aware. ***It's another to be treated invisibly by people who called themselves APAs for SOCIAL ACTION, by people who travel around the nation performing ethnocentrism, promoting my identity, and use my efforts, but don't want acknowledge people like me.*** Nix that, they would have nothing to do with people like me, if they had their way.

I put in too much personal effort in a sphere that doesn't acknowledge me. I made the mistake of truly caring about PAN Asian American causes. I made the mistake of thinking that when people perform about "my people" and "brown skin" on stage, they mean me or mine.

I made the mistake of thinking that a professor who runs an Asian American resource center would know about South Asians and not resort to making excuses about not finding "Indian stuff" as his reason for completely excluding Desis in a workshop called "Asian American Identity".

The last straw of the night was when I came across [Spoken word Artist], who I talked with and exchanged emails and addresses with not less than three weeks ago when he performed for our welcome event. This weekend, he called me "Aparna", the other brown person who is apparent at these events. And she wasn't even there yet. CAUSE YOU KNOW HOW ALL US BROWN FOLKS LOOK THE SAME. And when Aparna did come, and I introduced her to said embarrassed artist, he asked if I could tell him my name again. And I replied that I shouldn't have to.

I shouldn't have to justify myself and my identity over and over again, damn it.

Not if you mean the words you speak on stage. Not if you recognized my efforts in East Asian/Pacific Islander American/ PAN ASIAN spheres. NOT IF YOU SAW ME AS A FELLOW ASIAN AMERICAN.

Which he didn't.

And my mistake was that I did. And, THIS is my place in Asian America. And there is no point in him making awkward apologies for his mistake. It is not the 'mistake' that I am hurt by since mistakes are accidental. It is his mindset...and his purposeful neglect (of someone with my identity) is a reflection of his mindset. ***Your mindset is not accidental.***

I know that I tend to be emotion-driven and maybe some of you may think that I am making too big of a deal by this, but it really hurts to constantly be enthusiastic of your position in Asian America to [South Asian Americans] who come in and ask if he really is Asian or not, only to take them to a conference that tells them they are not.

I feel very lonely. At this point, I just need people to stand by me, and when I look around, I don't see any.

(Anushah Ahmed, Personal Communication Sept. 28, 2004)

Ms. Ahmed's testimony powerfully captures why we, as educators, need to make a conscious effort to recognize that even within Asian America, there are groups that feel marginalized, and we must make an effort to understand their experiences through their

voices. It is only in this way will we be able to understand the complexity of Asian America.

AN AFFIRMATION OF IDENTITY

In this section, I reflect upon the research questions that guided this study, through the integration of the research results into a deeper discussion of the themes which emerged from this study. This section will be divided into two parts. Within each part I offer discussion on each research question.

The Motivation to Join a South Asian Interest Sorority

The first research question was: What factors motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian Interest sorority? Through interview responses, focus group discussion, and my immersion within their community, I was able to develop an understanding of what specific factors actually influenced South Asian women to join Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority. There were three thematic categories that primarily answered this question: 1) Leadership and Professional Development; 2) Breaking Stereotypes; and 3) Sense of Belonging.

When women in the sisterhood reflected upon why they joined Kappa Phi Gamma, a major reason that emerged was the desire to be in a space that offered Leadership Opportunities and Professional Development. Given the image that the term “sorority” connoted, most of the participants were never interested in joining a sorority based on the assumption of what women in sororities were like. They were drawn to the sorority either through friends, or as the result of attending an information session. The interview participants commented on their observations of the professional demeanor and leadership skill set of the women they knew in the sorority. Additionally, as the interview data reflected, the women were drawn to the opportunity to plan programs,

fundraise for philanthropic efforts, engage in community service, and also participate in social events- often commenting how they never saw themselves as leaders prior to encountering the sorority. It is important to note that at the University of Texas, there are many opportunities for professional development and leadership opportunities, yet women were attracted to the sorority because of a combination of professional development within a sphere of South Asian American women. As one of the founders pointed out, Kappa Phi Gamma allowed and encouraged women to tap into their identities as South Asian women as the foundation of their leadership abilities. So, unlike other leadership opportunities, Kappa Phi Gamma provided an integrated and holistic approach that considered South Asian and female identity as contributing factors of leadership, rather than weaknesses.

In a similar vein, many women also shared their desire to be a part of an organization which broke stereotypes of South Asian women. Many of the stereotypes they brought up, included being viewed as shy, submissive, unassertive, and even unintelligent. Furthermore, the sisters expressed the additional struggle of being stereotyped by South Asian American men as being too aggressive. Through this dialogue it is also evident how internalized racism and sexism impacts South Asian American women from a gendered perspective. When the men in our community internalize the image of South Asian women as submissive and then expect us to embody that stereotype, they actively reinforce it, and place judgment upon women who do not fit that label. Additionally, because the men carry the power to affect the women's reputations within the community, this internal stereotype makes it a challenge for the women of Kappa Phi Gamma (as well as the women of any South Asian sorority) to assert themselves and live their vision. While only a few women mentioned this within the interviews, this struggle was very apparent in all of the programmatic decisions I

observed. For example, if the women had an event planned on a particular evening and the men (usually belonging to South Asian fraternities) wanted to have an event on that same evening, the men would typically convince the women to change their event, and at times even accuse them of not “supporting” the community if they stood their ground. However, if the roles were reversed, the women would not be able to exert that same power. This was a recurrent struggle internally within the South Asian American student community.

The discussion of having to deal with stereotypes was a passionate conversation within each of the interviews, and while they rarely directly connected their lack of leadership experiences prior to Kappa Phi Gamma to either internalized oppression based on these stereotypes and/or being treated based on those stereotypes, the connection between leadership/professional development and breaking stereotypes is very clear. It was not surprising that women would seek an organization which not only provided leadership opportunities, and that a direct natural by-product of these leadership opportunities was breaking those stereotypes (both external and internal) which may have hindered them from even pursuing leadership positions in the first place.

Finally, a unanimous sentiment, both within the interviews and the focus group, was the notion of a sense of belonging. Women who joined the sorority actively sought out the sorority specifically to have the opportunity to bond with other South Asian women. Regardless of if they came from communities with large South Asian populations or if they came from communities with little to no South Asian population, the women wanted a space where they could connect with one another, learn from one another, and not have to ‘explain themselves’ to one another- in terms of identity-related struggles with parents, societal expectations, and life choices. While most women were part of other South Asian organizations (usually cultural or religious), they noted that

those spaces did not necessarily provide a common ground or means for South Asian women to connect with one another in the way in which the sorority offered.

Sense of belonging also included being a part of a space that felt like home. Again, all of the women either used the word “family” or “home” to describe what the sorority meant to them. As their interviews reflected, the sorority provided a space for the women to essentially “be normal” together, in a space where they defined “normal.” Many women made reference to the fact that “home” meant being able to share cultural elements, including food, religion, language, clothing, parental expectations, etc. without feeling strange, inferior, or different. Transitioning to college is a very difficult experience for some students, especially students of color, and by providing this sense of belonging, Kappa Phi Gamma certainly positively impacts the wellness of the women who join the sisterhood. This impact is represented best by Nargis’s words, “Because of Kappa Phi Gamma I think I was happier. I think I smile more, and I don’t walk with my head down, you know? Physically, I think I’m a lot happier.”

These thematic categories aligned with the research on women, specifically women of color, within higher education. “Minority women in general have not had access to the formal routes of power... They have remained, for the most part, outside the core institutions that lead to power and status, which in turn, are related to an individual’s or group’s well-being, image, and identity” (Vasquez, 1988, p. 504). By participating in a space that offered a sense of belonging, leadership and professional development, and an opportunity to break stereotypes associated with South Asian women, Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority serves as a healthy point of intervention for South Asian American women who join The Sisterhood. These factors also align with the reasons that African American women joined Black sororities. “The nation’s oldest Black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, was founded...as an instrument to enrich the social and intellectual aspects

of college life for the increasing number of Black women students” (“Black Sorority”, 1998, p. 72). Additionally, these reasons align with the literature on development of women leaders (Whitt, 1994; Astin & Leland, 1991; Guido-DiBrito & Batchelor, 1988).

Impact of Sorority Involvement on Identity Development

As addressed in the literature review, early psychosocial theorists have not considered racial/ethnic identity as a factor which may impact identity development as a whole. There have been many identity development models that have been developed by scholars which take ethnic/racial identity into account, yet the study of Asian American identity development is still limited. Using Jean Kim’s model of Asian American Identity development, and also borrowing from literature and language of prior psychosocial theorists, I shall now offer discussion on the second research question: In what ways do joining a South Asian interest sorority impact the identity development of South Asian American women? This impact is best noted through the following thematic categories: 1) Ownership of a South Asian Identity; and 2) Positive Self Image.

The idea of “ownership” implies a sense of connection, and a proprietary relationship with the object that is owned. As discussed in the prior chapter, my original description of the thematic category, “Recognition a South Asian Identity,” was renamed by the women of the sorority as “Ownership of a South Asian Identity.” Their premise behind renaming the category was that at some level they all “recognized their identity,” but the issue was more how they came to “own” or embrace their identity as South Asian Americans. This distinction is important, as while the women used their own cultural, religious, and/or national identities (ex. Bangladeshi, Malayali, Muslim, Gujarati, etc.) to describe themselves, they all used the term “South Asian” to describe themselves in the context of the sorority. In the interviews, some even commented on the importance of the term “South Asian” as a means to bring them together, but they also recognized that

this term wasn't necessarily the most inclusive term. In discussion with one of the officers, we were talking about the term South Asian, and she struggled with the geographic limitations of that term when she learned of one of their new members whose family was from Guyana. While the new member was at some level of South Asian descent, the officer actually stopped to think about the limitations of the term South Asian, in a way that she might not have ever done before.

To the women in the sorority, Ownership of a South Asian identity meant recognizing that there was not one monolithic South Asian community, but in fact, that the community was very diverse. Many women, especially the Indian-Hindu American women, pointed out how they learned about Christian and Catholic Indians, and even different Muslim communities. One woman talked about how her involvement in the sorority and her relationship with another Pakistani American sorority sister allowed her to break stereotypes of Muslims that had been passed down to her by her grandparents and parents.

Through the sorority, not only did women share cultural and religious traditions, they also honored and respected one another's values. I was so impressed with the sorority, when at their public presentation of their new initiates, they changed their protocol out of respect for one of the initiate's religious beliefs. At this public presentation, the initiates typically perform a dance for the invited guests, but because one of the women did not feel it appropriate to dance in front of men due to her religious beliefs, the leadership of the sorority asked the men to leave for that part of the presentation. While many women noted differences among one another, they still felt a sense of cultural connection and solidarity based on shared elements of their South Asian identity. Those connections revolved around standards of beauty, parental expectations, and external perceptions of their identity.

The other major concept that was addressed under the theme of “Ownership of a South Asian Identity,” was the idea of fitting into “Asian America.” Through our discussions, I noted that the women, for the most part, did not naturally self-identify as “Asian American.” When I asked them about why they made the choice to create another Asian interest sorority, as opposed to joining the others that existed on campus at that time, the founders consistently responded that they did not “see themselves” in the already existing Asian American sororities. Even the current sisters further emphasized that they wanted a place where they “saw themselves.”

While Asian Americans are a very diverse community, it is important to recognize the impact of phenotypic differences and how those differences impact the identity the women chose to own. The continual reference to themselves as “brown” is reflective of that association. On the other hand, while the sisters may not have felt the need to join a sorority of predominantly East Asian American women, they did recognize the need to work coalitionally with one another to support Asian American progress on campus. Three Asian American sororities are on a council called Texas Asian Pan-Hellenic Council (TAPC), and each sorority sends delegates to TAPC. The outcome of this council is that the women who served on TAPC from Kappa Phi Gamma developed the understanding and need for Pan-Asian American student efforts on campus.

Reflecting upon Jean Kim’s Asian American Identity Development model, it is apparent how involvement in Kappa Phi Gamma impacts the identity development of the South Asian American women who join this sorority. While this may not always be true, it is not uncommon for Asian Americans to come to a college campus in the developmental stages of Ethnic Awareness or White Identification. Because the primary influences of college students at this point are their home environment and their school

environment, Asian Americans may even toggle between these stages depending upon their environment. So, students come to college either completely rejecting their ethnic/racial identity (“acting white” or “selling out”), or they may come to college immersed in their ethnic identity, which is more affiliated with a combination religion/language/culture/national identity. So, South Asian Americans come to campus as Gujarati, Malayali, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepali, Sikh, Jain, Ismaeli, etc. The sorority offers a space for these identities to co-exist and converge. Furthermore, since the sorority offers a sense of belonging, as well as the opportunities for leadership, it also becomes a positive environment and a general space for empowerment of the women in Kappa Phi Gamma. While the women come to the sorority seeking these particular elements, involvement in the sorority begins to precipitate other by-products. Women begin to think about their racial/ethnic identities as reflected by Kim’s third and fourth stages, Awakening to a Social and Political Consciousness and Redirection to an Asian American Consciousness.

The final theme, development of a “Positive Self-Image/Pride of Self,” further underscores the impact of sorority involvement on the identity development of South Asian American women. As a direct result of the leadership experiences, sense of belonging, breaking stereotypes, and owning their identities as South Asian Americans, the women are able to develop positive self-images of themselves. In her interview, Saira triumphantly shared:

I used to hate being an Indian woman. I used to hate it. I would continuously ignore it, but becoming a member of Kappa Phi Gamma I see that I’m a hybrid, I am a mixture of both, and I am proud of it. Because I am American, but damn right I’m Indian too.

The idea of pride in self as dependent upon, and interconnected with the other themes is prevalent throughout the testimonies of women. In another example, Helen shared:

Kappa Phi Gamma, to me means a hundred things. It means: family, how I made my career decision, how I met some of my best friends, why I have my job, why I got into [graduate] school, it is really how I grew up. For me personally it is how I learned about India. I had no idea about Hinduism or Islam. I knew nothing. It means so much to me. The letters to me are so sacred to me because that is a lot of my life. I know I'm like a 25-year-old now, and it is so weird, like oh yeah still a sorority thing, but that is how I grew up. I learned so much through life through it. Whether it was the culture or the leadership, it got me so far, taught me so much. It got me some of my best friends, it has given me experiences to learn and continue learning. I am confident, proud, and ready to take anything on.

The integration of these themes generates a sense of pride, and positive self-esteem, which ultimately aligns with Kim's fifth stage, Incorporation, which is marked by one's sense of internal comfort with her racial identity. Involvement in Kappa Phi Gamma has the potential to lead to this level of internal comfort.

As a caveat, we must also be critical of stage-theories. The assumption that any developmental process is linear completely oversimplifies the identity development process, and also potentially risks us as educators trying to "diagnose" or "place" students in their appropriate "stage." These stages are not only not linear, they are also contextual based on life experiences. We must be careful to use stage-theories as a tool for insight and understanding.

CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THIS STUDY

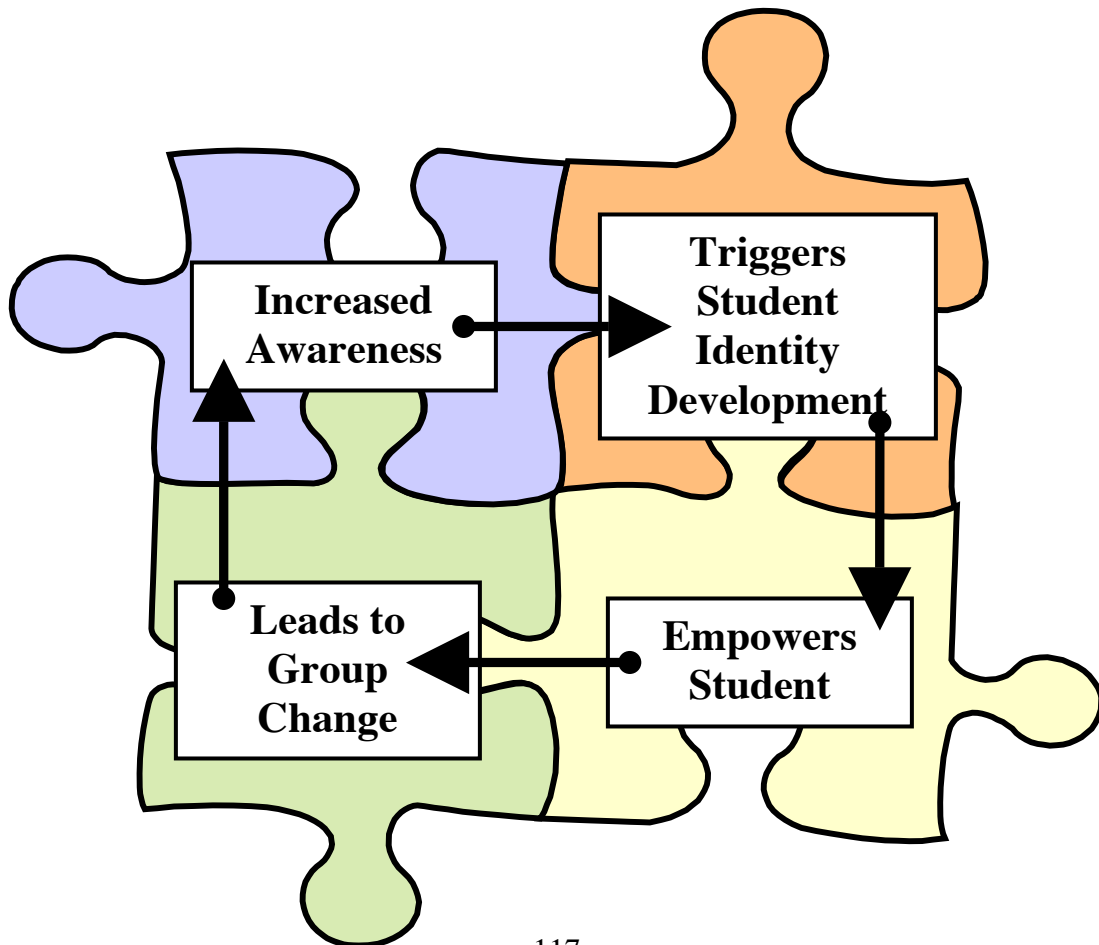
The purpose of this study was to determine whether involvement in a South Asian American sorority impacted the identity development of South Asian American collegiate women. Through the thematic data that was presented in Chapter four, and the integration of those themes in the prior section, the outcome of this study suggests that for the women of Kappa Phi Gamma sorority, involvement in the sorority did, indeed,

impact the identity development of the participants of the study. Within this section, I shall offer the conclusions I made based on the findings of this study, along with recommendations for educators.

South Asian American Empowerment Model

Based on the findings of this study, I was able to develop a “South Asian American Empowerment Model.” In this section, I shall describe the model section by section, incorporating the emergent themes and prior academic literature which informed this study. The South Asian American Empowerment Model is shown in the following figure:

Figure 1: South Asian American Empowerment Model



Increased Awareness

I defined the first step in the South Asian American Empowerment Model as Increased Awareness. Through the findings in this study, one of the primary motivating factors which influenced women to join The Sisterhood was developing a sense of belonging through building bonds with other South Asian American women and also finding a home/family environment in college. Ultimately, the women all sought a space where they were able to cultivate an increased awareness of themselves as South Asian Americans. This idea is best reflected through the repeated emphasis that the participants placed on the outcomes they attributed to sorority membership, including a strengthened confidence in one's racial/ethnic identity and development of a positive self-image.

Based on this study, I extrapolate that involvement in a South Asian interest sorority is a factor which contributes to the empowerment of South Asian American women. This idea is also supported by women's leadership development research done by Astin and Leland (1991), and also Walter Kimbrough's research which points out the positive impact of involvement of African American students in Black fraternities and sororities.

Triggers Student Identity Development

I defined the second step in the South Asian American Empowerment Model as "Triggers Student Identity Development." Within the context of this study, women within the sorority experienced internal growth in many capacities. Many of the participants talked about how their involvement in the sorority made them better leaders, and how the sorority also allowed them to tap into their identities as South Asian American women as a source of strength, rather than a weakness as they may have previously perceived. Many participants in this study indicated that prior to sorority involvement, they associated their identities as South Asian women with the stereotypes

external communities place upon them. Additionally, multiple participants also revealed that never knew what they were capable of accomplishing, either socially, academically, or professionally, until their involvement within Kappa Phi Gamma.

I propose that upon joining the sorority, once South Asian American women have developed and increased awareness of who they are, that they are able to play a more active part in developing their identities. It is only after recognizing one's racial/ethnic/gender identity, that a South Asian American woman can then own that identity as a strength, and apply that strength in her day-to-day realities. As suggested by Chickering & Reisser (1993), identity development is developed most thoroughly during the college years, thus involvement within a South Asian interest sorority maximizes the opportunities that South Asian American women have to actively engage in the identity development process, while also centering their racial/ethnic and gender identities as central pillars upon which they can draw support.

Empowers Student

I defined the third step in the South Asian American Empowerment Model as "Empowers Student." This step naturally follows the first two steps given that once a student has increased awareness of their identity, and can then actively engage in their identity development process, that they would consequently feel empowered. Within the context of this study, empowerment was reflected in two ways- on an individual level, and on a group level. Since South Asian Americans (and especially South Asian American women) often see themselves as extensions of their group identity, looking at what the women in the sorority achieve as individuals, and as members of the group are both equally important facets of empowerment.

First, participants in the study continually referenced the development of a positive self-image as discussed in earlier sections. Additionally, many participants also

pointed out their excitement about and personal commitment to breaking stereotypes and changing the perceptions of South Asian American women. The idea of empowerment was also seen in the actions of the individuals who participated in the study. After joining the sorority, many women pursued other leadership opportunities on campus, or professionally. This commitment was also reflected in the type of programming created by Kappa Phi Gamma, including their recognition of outstanding South Asian American women by awarding a yearly scholarship, and also by hosting a South Asian Women's Empowerment Retreat.

On a group level, since the foundation of Kappa Phi Gamma is rooted in the eight principles of character, leadership, scholarship, sisterhood, service, womanhood, culture, and self, The Sisterhood makes decisions based on these core values. Each year, Kappa Phi Gamma holds a national conference, where The Sisterhood comes together to strengthen their leadership/organizational development skills. They attend workshops related to South Asian issues, women's issues, leadership, and ethical decision-making. Their goal at the national conference is to tap into their eight principles. While these principles reflect the entire sorority as a group, they also serve to empower individuals to consider these same principles within their personal spaces.

Leads to Group Change

Once many individuals within a group experience empowerment at the individual level, the entire group eventually experiences a change, or shift in consciousness at the community level, which is why the fourth step in the South Asian American Empowerment Model is defined as "Leads to Group Change." This step in the cycle has the potential to be very powerful- especially in the South Asian American space. As pointed out earlier, South Asian Americans tend to see themselves as extensions of their own group identity. Within this study, multiple women addressed the pressure they felt

to “carry the reputation” of the community. Additionally, one participant also reflected upon the United States after 9-11, and how South Asians had been stereotyped as a result of national backlash.

In the past six years of Kappa Phi Gamma’s existence, one can already see how individual empowerment leads to group change. Referring back to the programming developed by Kappa Phi Gamma, their South Asian Women’s Empowerment Retreat is an example of this dynamic. The vision of the retreat emerged when individuals within the sorority began asking questions about how the sorority should contribute to the South Asian female community outside of the sorority. The outcome was a retreat for South Asian American women to address identity-relevant issues. Not only did certain individuals feel empowered to create this retreat, it also led to an evolution of the consciousness and commitment of the women within Kappa Phi Gamma to give back to the South Asian American female community, but ultimately, the retreat as the outcome, also contributed to a group change within the South Asian community.

It is still too soon to determine what the long-term impact of Kappa Phi Gamma will be on the South Asian American women who joined the sorority. According to Walter Kimbrough’s research on Black fraternities and sororities, and Paula Gidding’s book documenting the history of Black sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, Greek-letter organizations have had a profound effect on African American students who join such groups. Furthermore, almost approaching 100 years of existence, the cumulative community impact of Black fraternities and sororities is very evident, with the large number of community development programs, educational programs, and community service programs directed toward the upliftment of the African American community.

Summary: South Asian American Empowerment Model

I offer the South Asian American Empowerment Model as a cyclical model to identify how South Asian Americans might be empowered within their college environment. I do not refer to this model as an “identity development” model, because identity development sometimes connotes an individual process. In order to avoid connotation, I presented this model as an “empowerment model” I wanted to choose language that more accurately reflected the inter-relatedness of an individual and group developmental process. With South Asian Americans and Asian Americans as a whole, the sensitivity to group process and identity is a critical factor that is often unaddressed in identity development literature.

I also want to emphasize the impact of the cyclical nature of this model within the South Asian American female community. Over time, once a community can experience change as a group, then the individuals in the community once again reach the step of “Increased Awareness,” where they have learned more about themselves as a result of the group change. The cycle then continues through the steps of triggering identity development, empowering the student, and once again leading to group change. Recognizing an individual’s group membership, especially within marginalized communities, allows educators to better serve individuals within those communities and also serve as a source of positive intervention within this cycle.

APPLICATION OF THE SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN EMPOWERMENT MODEL

In this study I examined the factors which motivated South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, and I also investigated how sorority involvement impacted the identity development of South Asian American women. I have proposed a South Asian American Empowerment Model based on the conclusions drawn from this study. However, in this section, I extract recommendations from the findings

and expand these recommendations to different communities within higher education based on this model, in order to more adequately and holistically address the needs of South Asian American women.

While the findings of this study reveal that sorority involvement has a direct impact on the identity development of the South Asian American women who were participants of this study, through the proposed South Asian American Empowerment model, I believe that as educators within higher education institutions, we can intervene and support the developmental process of South Asian American women using this model as a tool. To address the needs of a student holistically, we must consider their environment both inside the classroom and outside the classroom, thus my recommendations are separated into two major parts-Academics and Ethnic Studies, and Student Services.

Academics and the Role of Ethnic Studies

Within the South Asian American Empowerment Model, the notion of increased awareness plays an integral role in triggering a student's identity development process. Because she is already receiving many cues of what it means to be a South Asian American woman from her own community, it is especially important for us as educators to recognize the spaces where we might be able to introduce different "cues" or identity-relevant information to South Asian American college women. One very important space where this intervention is possible and needed, is in the classroom.

Ethnic studies movements began on college campuses in the late 1960's based on the student push for an academic space that reflected the voices of multiple communities and perspectives. Asian American studies today must remember that vision, and diversify curriculum to include courses pertinent and/or specifically tailored to South Asian American women. Asian American studies programs and coursework can

potentially increase the level of awareness a South Asian American woman may have about her own identity- socially, politically, and personally. This increased awareness, as the model proposes, catalyzes movement through the cycle.

Student Services

Within the field of student affairs, there are multiple points of intervention, and subsequent intersection of services that could be offered with different steps within the South Asian American Identity Model.

Counseling Services

It is especially critical for counseling professionals to understand the uniqueness of South Asian American women as an identity group. When South Asian American women seek counseling services, it is important for the counselor to recognize the great impact group identity could potentially have on the decisions his/her client might make. Having the ability to intervene at the “Trigger Student Identity Development” step, the counselor can offer identity-centered therapy which may encourage the student to engage in exploring her own identity formation.

Career Services

Similarly, career services professionals should also take into consideration how South Asian American women construct and perceive their identities. Often struggling between what they have been raised to believe is expected of them within their role functions as daughters, wives, and mothers and what their own aspirations may be, South Asian American women sometimes do not even realize they are negotiating this conflict as they make career decisions. Offering advice which forces women to see their identity and their career choices as competing interests ultimately leads to the student sacrificing her career goals, however, a career counselor can intervene by “Increasing Awareness” of

how successful career women have maintained balance and developed healthy life and career choices. This intervention is powerful, too, because it eventually empowers more South Asian American women to try different career options, ultimately increasing and diversifying the numbers of South Asian American women professionals over the long-term.

Multicultural Centers

Multicultural Centers offices often provide a safe space for students of color on university campuses. Perhaps the most influential point of intervention, Multicultural Centers often provide leadership development, program planning, and connection to other student services in an identity-centered way. What is most needed in these spaces, as well as others, are South Asian American professionals who work within the office. Students are drawn to reflections of themselves, and are likely to enter a center where they see an older version of themselves. Because there are few safe spaces for students of color on university campuses, Multicultural Center professionals also need to be equipped to understand the differences of needs among students of color, and among Asian American groups. These Centers could serve as a point of intervention at any step throughout the cycle, which is what makes awareness of South Asian American issues especially critical in this space.

Student Activities

Student Activities departments typically house the leadership development programs for student leaders and organizations. Depending upon the institution, these areas may also serve as the funding body through which student groups seek monies for their events, or a decision-making body to determine individual/organizational leadership excellence. With such a great charge comes the increased responsibility to be aware of

student issues at the group level. One of the challenges faced by South Asian American women, is that they are seen as shy, submissive, and/or quiet. As a result, they are either assumed to fit that stereotype, and rarely considered for leadership positions, or they are considered “troublemakers” if they happen to NOT fit the stereotype, and dismissed.

Student Activities professionals must practice identity-centered advising of student groups. In the case of South Asian American women leaders, this might also mean considering their group membership and how it impacts their decision-making process. It might also mean that intervention and leadership development occur at a group level to promote group change, in order to increase effectiveness of the community as a whole, the individual woman as the leader, and the organization itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SUPPORTING ASIAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

While the purpose of this study was to explore how involvement in a South Asian American sorority impacted the identity development of South Asian American women in the sorority, it is important to recognize the role that Asian American student organizations play in the lives of Asian American students. As a result, this section offers recommendations to higher education practitioners on how to support Asian American student groups.

Student Affairs Administrators

It is especially important for practitioners in Student Affairs to recognize the diversity of the Asian American community. First and foremost, we should be familiar with the Asian American populations at our institutions, and our communities. Do we have a large Chinese American population? Do we have a large Hmong population? Are there more women than men in the community? By familiarizing ourselves with the demographics of the Asian American community locally, and institutionally, we can

better assess the history of the community on a regional level, along with the specific needs of the population on an institutional level.

Student identity development courses within Higher Education graduate programs need to be expanded beyond the basics, to include identity development theories of people of color, and of women. As I noticed in the research literature, many scholars tried to transplant existing theories which were developed based on a homogeneous White male population, on Asian American students. This practice does not do our students of color justice, and it forces students of color to conform to White norms, and paints an inaccurate picture of their developmental process. In the case of Asian American students, we must be aware of the role that external factors such as family, community, etc. play into one's sense of self. Jean Kim's Asian American Identity Development model provides more accurate insight into the developmental journey of Asian Americans. Building upon her model, and drawing from its strengths, the South Asian American Empowerment Model shows how active recognition of one's identity in relation to their group orientation ultimately not only benefits the individual, but eventually their identity group, too.

Finally, practitioners within different departments of student affairs need to build partnerships with one another. Kappa Phi Gamma is the ideal example of why such partnerships are needed. One of the greatest challenges that students negotiate, even with group membership, are the labels or stereotypes placed upon them. If a group like Kappa Phi Gamma, a sorority, seeks leadership development, we must be careful not to dismiss the group because of our own stereotypes of what a sorority might be. The outcome of this study clearly shows that sorority involvement resulted in some level of group change. Ultimately the goal of activism is also to affect change at the group level, too. Thus we must challenge ourselves to expand our definitions of leadership and activism, and not

make assumptions that activism and sorority membership are opposing interests, when for certain communities, they may actually be inter-dependent upon one another.

Taking this idea a step further, I also noticed politically, that one of the biggest challenges of Greek letter organizations of color is that they are not fully embraced by any area in student life. With the diversifying picture of Greek Life nationally (Reisberg, 2000), Greek Life administrators are not prepared nor equipped to deal with the rapidly increasing number of Greeks of color. Historically focused on issues associated with hazing-related incidents, Greek Life areas have developed a myopic view of student development centered around “risk management.” I offer the idea that risk management goes beyond hazing, and expands into many other issues, including how Greeks of color are treated within the Greek community. With the incidents of racism through theme parties and black-face incidents on the rise in recent years, Greek Life educators may want to consider expanding their definition of risk management to include addressing racism, and also taking a proactive stance on developing Greeks of color, especially Asian American Greeks, taking their racial/ethnic identity into consideration.

On the flip side, Student Activities areas, which typically manage student organizations, dismiss Greeks of color, under the assumption that they are being supported through a Greek Life office or a Multicultural Center. On campuses with Multicultural Centers, it is important for Student Activities, Greek Life, and Multicultural Centers to partner, and offer shared support of Asian American fraternities and sororities.

Ultimately, what we see happening on college campuses, is a “hot potato” game, where each area assumes that another area is responsible for fraternities and sororities of color. In an ideal setting, there would be strong partnerships built among these types of offices to better serve the students. In the case of Asian American students who have been invisible as a “community with specific needs,” we must really build trust with the

students by understanding the values, norms, and realities they live by, and how they are impacted on predominantly White campuses. Engaging in dialogue, and offering the support and the willingness to understand the uniqueness of the Asian American student needs encourages Asian American students to explore and understand their ethnic identities.

Asian American Studies Programs

Asian American Studies programs are founded in activism. It is especially important for activist spaces such as Ethnic Studies, to not fall into doing what they aim to dismantle- which is stereotyping. We must encourage our Asian American students, Asian American student groups, and especially Asian American fraternities and sororities to take courses in Asian American Studies, and we must embrace the good they do for our communities. Seeing our students in a holistic light, allows us to affect change within our Asian American community. Asian American Studies programs should also partner with Multicultural Services offices, and even Greek Life offices to plan events, and build co-curricular experiences with the students, and student affairs communities. It is through Asian American Studies that Asian American students have the opportunity to be the center of dialogue, and this is a very empowering academic space, which has the ability to shift the consciousness of our student groups, which in turn, shifts the consciousness of the community at-large. We must expand our definitions of activism, and re-define what it means to be a change agent to include all of our groups- especially Asian American fraternities and sororities.

Future Research

This study was conducted at a large, public, research institution, with one sorority of one specific ethnic background within the Asian American community. Research on

Asian American student experiences in higher education is rare. Research on fraternities and sororities (with the exception of hazing, drinking, etc.) is rare. Combining these two communities- there is virtually nothing on Asian American fraternities and sororities in the higher education literature. Future research could include looking at the same sorority over many different types of campuses, and also beginning research with fraternities to see the differences across gender. Additionally, we need to expand our research on Asian American student groups in general. Future studies might include exploring how different types of organizations build community on their campuses, and what factors influence students to seek an Asian American community. There is a large niche for research opportunities within the intersection of Asian America and higher education research.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine whether involvement in a South Asian American sorority impacted the identity development of South Asian American women. Through the analysis of data gathered from in-depth interviews of seventeen participants, direct participant observation, and focus group dialogue, several themes emerged. These themes included: Leadership/Professional Development, Pride of Self/Positive Self Image, Breaking Stereotypes/Changing Perceptions, Sense of Belonging, and Ownership of a South Asian American Identity.

The results of this qualitative study revealed the factors which motivate South Asian American women to join a South Asian interest sorority, while also unfolding the impact of sorority involvement on the identity development process of South Asian American women in the sorority. South Asian American women were drawn to Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority because they sought professional/leadership development, a sense of belonging among South Asian American women, and a place where they could actively

work toward breaking stereotypes associated with being a South Asian American woman. Additional outcomes of sorority involvement included a stronger ownership of their identities as South Asian Americans, and a positive self-image. All of the women attributed their transformation and confidence to their involvement in the sorority.

Based on these findings, I developed a South Asian American Empowerment Model, which took into consideration individual identity development being connected to group identity development thus proposing that individual change and group change are connected for communities like South Asian American women, whose individual identity is impacted by their ethnic/racial community. This cyclical model has four steps: 1) Increased Awareness (which) 2) Triggers Student Identity Development (which) 3) Empowers the Student (which) 4) Lead to Group Change (which goes back to step 1). Because this model is based on the findings of this study alone, further research must be done to see if this process applies to other South Asian female groups, South Asian groups, or Asian American groups.

In effect, the founders of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority succeeded in creating a home where one did not exist, and that vision has expanded to touch the lives of many South Asian American women, and many more to come. Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority truly serves as an affirmation of identity for the women who join The Sisterhood.

Appendix A

General Interview Guide

1. Why did you decide to join a sorority?
2. How did you pick Kappa Phi Gamma? Compare that option to other Asian American sororities? Compare that option to other sororities in general?
3. Do you see a difference between South Asian American interest vs. Asian American interest?
4. How has this experience impacted your college experience?
5. How does this involvement in the sorority compare to other organizations you are involved in?
6. What are some of the challenges you face personally as a member of the sorority?
 - a. Culturally?
 - b. Parental Perception?
 - c. Community perception?
7. Share one of your most memorable moments in this process.
8. What have you learned from joining this sorority?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Permission Letter to Kappa Phi Gamma National Board of Regents

Dear Kappa Phi Gamma National Board of Regents,

I am writing to request official permission from you, the National Governing Body of Kappa Phi Gamma, Sorority, Inc. to conduct a research study on the impact of a South Asian American sorority on the racial identity development of members who choose to join the sisterhood of Kappa Phi Gamma, Sorority, Inc. Attached is my background research.

The goal of this study is to contribute to the research on Asian American Racial Identity Development, along with the place the South Asian Americans hold within the dialogue of Asian America. My goal is not to seek out anything that is sacred, ritualistic, or internal to the sorority. Rather, the vision is to examine the impact a South Asian American interest sorority has on women who belong to the sorority. The study would involve individual interviews with sisters from The University of Texas at Austin chapter of the sorority. Each interview is set up with open-ended questions, and a list of those questions is available for your review.

Because this study involves the Kappa Phi Gamma chapter at The University of Texas at Austin, I would like to offer group input into the study, by having sisters review their own interview transcripts, having focus group dialogue, and also having National Board of Regents members review my manuscripts to suggest changes.

I consider this process a shared process that I hope we will all enjoy. Please let me know if you have any further questions, or need further clarification. In advance, I thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Mamta Motwani Accapadi
phone: 512-653-6233
email: mamta@mail.utexas.edu

Appendix C



Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Inc. National Board of Regents

1709 Chincoteague Way
Round Rock, TX 78681
www.kappaphigamma.org
email: kpgregents@yahoo.com

Regents & Regions

July 9, 2004

Midwest Region
Mitzi Chanakala
mitzi@mail.utexas.edu

Faculty of the Graduate School
University of Texas at Austin

Central Texas
Samina Chowdhury
samina@mail.utexas.edu

To Whom It May Concern:

May it be known that this letter acknowledges and approves the fine work Ms. Mamta Motwani Acapadi is currently researching within the field of South Asian-American Studies. We, the National Board of Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Incorporated, and its members, fully approve and participate as willing and informed participants in any interviews requested by the researcher.

Southeast Region
Bella Desai
bddesai22@yahoo.com

Please feel free to contact any member of the National Board should you have any questions or concerns.

*Southwest Coast
Region*
Anu
Abrahamnu11@hotmail.com

Regards,

/Bella Desai/

Northeast Region
Bincy Jacob
bincy06@hotmail.com

*The National Board of Regents
Kappa Phi Gamma Sorority, Inc*

*North & Central
Texas Region*
Jaya Mathew
jaya@mail.utexas.edu

Northwest Coast Region
Rekha Reddy
rreddy23@yahoo.com

"Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul. Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal." -Pamela Vaull Stern

Appendix D

SHORT CONSENT FORM

Title: *Understanding the Effect of a South Asian American Sorority on the Racial Identity Development Journey of South Asian American Women*

Conducted By: Mamta Motwani Accapadi IRB PROTOCOL #: 2004-06-0076
Of University of Texas at Austin: Dept. of Education Administration; Telephone: 512-653-6233
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. William Moore, Ph.D.
Of University of Texas at Austin: Dept. of Education Administration; Telephone: 512-471-7551

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

The purpose of this study is to *determine how participation in a South Asian American sorority affects the racial identity development journey of South Asian American women*. The study will involve approximately 20 women who are sisters of Kappa Phi Gamma, Sorority, Inc.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- participate in an interview with the researcher
- participate in a focus group discussion
- review transcripts of your interview to verify your thoughts/words

Total estimated time to participate in study is 2 hours for interview and focus group, and 1 hour for transcript review

Risks and Benefits of being in the study

- a primary risk involves a potential loss of confidentiality
- the risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life
- this study may offer some psychological risk and/or mental stress
- a benefit includes learning about Asian American Racial Identity Research

Confidentiality:

- interviews or sessions will be audio or videotaped;
- tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them;
- tapes will be kept in a secure location;
- tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates;
- tapes will be erased after they are transcribed or coded.

Compensation:

- There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

Contacts and Questions:

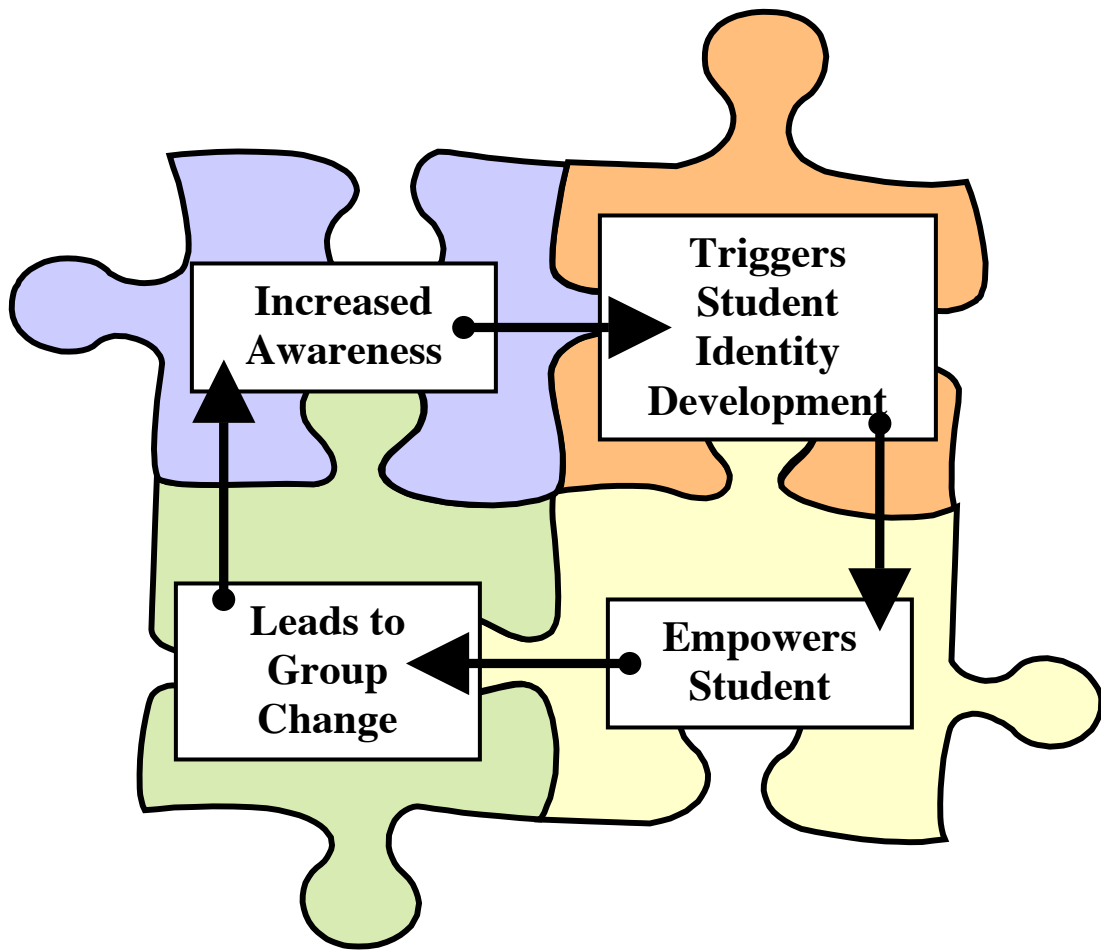
If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix E

South Asian American Empowerment Model



Bibliography

- Adams, Maurianne. (2001). Core Processes of Racial Identity Development. In *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Analogy*, Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe & Bailey W. Jackson III (Eds.), pp. 209 - 242. New York: New York University Press.
- Ahmed, Anushah. (2004). Personal Communication. September 28, 2004.
- Ahmed, Kauser. (1999). Adolescent Development for South Asian American Girls. In *Emerging Voices: South Asian American Women Redefine Self, Family, and Community*, Sangeeta Gupta (Ed.), pp. 37-48. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Alvarez, Alvin N. (Spring 2002). Racial Identity and Asian Americans: Supports and Challenges. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 33-43.
- Alvarez, Alvin N. & Kimura, Erin F. (July 2001). Asian Americans and Racial Identity: Dealing with Racism and Snowballs. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 23(3), pp. 192-206.
- Alvarez, Alvin N. & Liu, William Ling (Spring 2002). Student Affairs and Asian American Studies: An Integrative Perspective. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 73-80.
- Armas, Genaro C. (May 1, 2004). Asian Populations Surging Across America. Associate Press. Retrieved on May 4, 2004 (http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20040501/ap_on_re_us/asians_population_surge)
- Astin, H.S., & Leland, C. (1991). *Women of Influence, Women of Vision: A Cross-Generational Study of Leaders and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Atkinson, Paul & Coffey, Amanda (1997). Analyzing Documentary Realities. In *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*. David Silverman (Ed.), pp. 45-62. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Barnes, Jessica S. & Bennett, Claudette E. (February 2002). *The Asian Population: 2000*. U.S. Census Bureau: U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Bernal, Dolores Delgado (1998). Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research. *Harvard Education Review*, 68(4), pp. 555-579.
- Black Sorority Boom. (October 1998). *Ebony*, pp. 69-75.

- Burawoy, M. [et al.] (1991). *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Chan, Kenyon S. (February 2000). Rethinking the Asian American Studies Project: Bridging the Divide between 'Campus' and 'Community'. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 3(1), pp. 17-36.
- Chan, Sucheng (1991). *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Chang, Robert S. (1993). Toward an Asian American Legal Scholarship: Critical Race Theory, Post Structuralism, and Narrative Space. *California Law Review*, 81, pp. 1241-1298.
- Chang, Robert (2000). Why We Need a Critical Asian American Legal Studies. In *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, J. Wu and M. Song (Eds.), pp. 363-378. New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.
- Chew-Ogi, Charlene & Ogi, Alan Yoshiharu (Spring 2002). Epilogue. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 91-96.
- Chickering, A.W. & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and Identity. (2nd Ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Chin, Andrew (1995/1996). The 1995 National Asian American Studies Examination in U.S. High Schools. *Amerasia Journal*, 21(3), pp. 121-134.
- Chuh, Kandice (2003). *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Coffey, Amanda (1999). *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cross, W., & Fhagen-Smith, P. (2001). Patterns of African American Identity Development: A Life Span Perspective. In *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Analogy*, Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe & Bailey W. Jackson III (Eds.), pp. 243-270. New York: New York University Press.
- Collins, Patricia Hill (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

- DasGupta, Monisha (1997). What is Indian about You? A Gendered, Transnational Approach to Ethnicity. *Gender and Society*, 11(5), pp. 572-596.
- DasGupta, S. & Das DasGupta, S. (1993). Journeys: Reclaiming South Asian Feminism. In *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*, The Women of South Asian Descent Collective (Eds.), pp. 123-130. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonne S. (Eds.) (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Doshi, Sucheta (1996). Divided Consciousness Amidst a New Orientalism: South Asian Identity Formation on Campus. In *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America*, Sunaina Maira & Rajini Srikanth (Eds.), pp. 201-213. New York: The Asian American Writers' Workshop.
- Donvan, John & Brown, Aaron (1999, June 28). What happens when a neighbor looks like an enemy? [3305 words]. *ABC Nightline* [Television Broadcast]. Retrieved November 15, 1999, from LexisNexis Academic database.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1990). *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: First Vintage Books, Library of America.
- East of California Network. *Organizing Information*. Retrieved on January 12, 2004. (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/eoc/resources/startingprogram/orginfo.htm>).
- Feagin, J.R., Orum, A.M., & Sjoberg, G. (1991). *A Case for the Case Study*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Fries-Britt, Sharon L. & Turner, Bridget (September/October 2001). Facing Stereotypes: A Case Study of Black Students on a White Campus. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42(5), pp. 420-429.
- García, Ana Maria. (1999). Multiculturalism: an “as if” phenomenon. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 12(3), pp. 299-310.
- Giddings, Paula (1988). *In Search of Sisterhood: Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement*. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Gilligan, Carol (1982). *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gotanda, Neil (1995). Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory and Asian American Studies. *Amerasia Journal*, 21(1 & 2), pp. 127-135.

- Greeley, Ann (1991). Patterns of College Women's Development: A Cluster Analysis Approach. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32(), p. 516-524.
- Guido-DiBrito, F., & Batchelor, S.W. (Winter 1988). Developing Leadership Potential through Student Activities and Organizations. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 44, pp. 51-62.
- Gupta, Anu (1998). At the Crossroads: College Activism and its Impact on Asian American Identity Formation. In *A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America*, L.D. Shankar and R. Srikanth (Eds.), pp. 127-145. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Handler, Lisa (1995). In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy. *Gender and Society*, 9(2), pp. 236-255.
- Harding, Sandra. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Healy, Patrick (August 5, 2003). 3 Indians Attacked on Street. *The New York Times*. Retrieved on August 5, 2003 (<http://www.modelminority.com/article484.html>).
- Helms, J. E. (1995). An Update of Helms' White and People of Color Racial Identity Models. In *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, J.G. Ponterotto, J.M. Casas, L.A. Suzuki, and C.M. Alexander (Eds.), pp. 181-198. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- hooks, bell (2000). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge: South End Press.
- Hu, Arthur (1989). Asian Americans: Model Minority or Double Minority? *Amerasia Journal*, 15(1), pp. 243-257.
- Hughes, Marvalene (Winter 1988). Developing Leadership Potential for Minority Women. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 44, pp. 63-76.
- Hune, Shirley (Spring 2002). Demographics and Diversity of Asian American College Students. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 11-20.
- Hune, Shirley (July/August 1994). The Role of Asian American Studies. *Change*, 26(4), p. 44.
- Hune, Shirley & Nash, Phil Tajitsu (February 2000). Reconceptualizing Community, Pedagogy, and Paradigms: Asian American Studies and Higher Education. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 3(1), pp. 7-15.

- Ibrahim, Farah, Ohnishi, Ifumi & Sandhu, Daya Singh (January 1997). Asian American Identity Development: A Culture Specific Model for South Asian Americans. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 25(1), pp. 34-51.
- Kang, K.C. (2000, March 2). U.S. Asians Seen as 'Alien,' Study Finds; Ethnicity: American Culture is not Fully Accepting, Though Bias Has Declined, Report Says. *Los Angeles Times*, p. A3.
- Kanpol, Barry (1998). Where Was I? Or Was I? In *Being Reflexive in Critical Educational and Social Research*, Geoffrey Shacklock & John Smyth (Eds.), pp. 191-201. London: Falmer Press.
- Kawaguchi, Shozo (Spring 2003). Ethnic Identity Development and Collegiate Experience of Asian Pacific American Students: Implications for Practice. *NASPA Journal*, 40(3), pp. 13-29.
- Kibria, Nazli (1998). The Racial Gap: South Asian American Racial Identity and the Asian American Movement. In *A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America*, L.D. Shankar & R. Srikanth (Eds.), pp. 69-78. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kibria, Nazli (September 1998). The Contested Meanings of "Asian American": Racial Dilemmas in the Contemporary U.S. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21(5), pp. 939-958.
- Kibria, Nazli (2000). Not Asian, Black, or White? Reflections on South Asian American Racial Identity. In *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, J. Wu and M. Song (Eds.), pp. 363-378. New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.
- Kim, Heather & Rendon, Laura (1998). Student Characteristics, School Characteristics, and Educational Aspirations of Six Asian American Ethnic Groups. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 26(3), pp. 166-177.
- Kim, Jean (2001). Asian American Identity Development Theory. In *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Analogy*, Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe & Bailey W. Jackson III (Eds.), pp. 67-90. New York: New York University Press.
- Kimbrough, Walter (1995). Self-Assessment, Participation, and Value of Leadership Skills, Activities, and Experiences for Black Students Relative to Their Membership in Historically Black Fraternities and Sororities. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64(1), pp. 63-74.
- Kimbrough, Walter (1999). The Impact of Membership in Black Greek-Letter Organizations on Black Students' Involvement in Collegiate Activities and Their

- Development of Leadership Skills. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 67(2), pp. 96-105.
- Kimbrough, Walter (2002). Guess Who's Coming to Campus: The Growth of Black, Latin, and Asian Fraternal Organizations. Retrieved January 30, 2002 from <http://www.naspa.org/netresults/index.cfm>
- Kodama, C.M., McEwen, M.K., Liang, C.T.H., & Lee, S. (Summer 2001). A Theoretical Examination of Psychosocial Issues for Asian Pacific American Students. *NASPA Journal*, 38(4), pp. 411-437.
- Kodama, C.M., McEwen, M.K., Liang, C.T.H., & Lee, S. (Spring 2002). An Asian American Perspective on Psychosocial Student Development Theory. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 45-59.
- Kuh, G.D. & Lyons, J.W. (1990). Fraternities and Sororities: Lessons from the College Experiences Study. *NASPA Journal*, 28(1), pp. 20 – 29.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria (2000). Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition*, Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonne S. (Eds.), pp. 257-278. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lagdameo, A., Lee, S., Nguyen, B., Liang, C. T. H., Lee, S., Kodama, C.M.& McEwen, M.K. (Spring 2002). Voices of Asian American Students. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 5-10.
- Lee, Richard M. & Davis III, Claytie (January/February 2000). Cultural Orientation, Past Multicultural Experience, and a Sense of Belonging on Campus for Asian American College Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(1), pp. 110-114.
- Lee, Richard M. & Yoo, Hyung Chol (2004). Structure and Measurement of Ethnic Identity for Asian American College Students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51(2), pp. 263-269.
- Lee, Robert G. (1999). *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Liang, C.T.H., Lee, S. & Ting, M.P. (Spring 2002). Developing Asian American Leaders. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 81-89.
- Linnehan, F., Konrad, A.M., Reitman, F., Greenhalgh, A., & London, M. (2003). Behavioral Goals for a Diverse Organization: The Effects of Attitudes, Social Norms, and Racial Identity for Asian Americans and Whites. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 33(7), pp. 1331-1359.

- Madriz, Esther (2000). Focus Groups in Feminist Research. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition*, Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonne S. (Eds.), pp. 835-850. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Maira, Sunaina M. (2002). *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Matsuda, M., Lawrence, C.R., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K.W. (1993). *Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*. San Francisco: Westview Press.
- Matsuda, Mari (1997). *Where is Your Body?: And Other Essays on Race, Gender, and the Law*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- McBee, Susanna (1984, April 2). Asian Americans: Are They Making the Grade? *U.S. News and World Report*, Volume 96, pp. 41-46.
- McKenzie, Andre (1990). Community Service and Social Action: Using the Past to Guide the Future of Black Greek-letter Fraternities. *NASPA Journal*, 28(1), pp. 30- 36.
- Min, Pyong Gap & Kim, Rose (Eds.) (1999). *Struggle for Ethnic Identity: Narratives by Asian American Professionals*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Min, Pyong Gap (Ed.) (2002). *The Second Generation: Ethnic Identity Among Asian Americans*. New York: AltaMira Press.
- Min, Timothy J. (1997). Legal History of Asian-American Discrimination & The Illegal Campaign Funds Inquiry. Retrieved November 8, 1999 from <http://www.wcl.american.edu/publjournals/jurist/5.97/min.html>
- Monaghan, Peter (1999, April 2). A New Momentum in Asian American Studies. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 45(30), p. A16.
- Motwani, J.K., Gosine, M., & Barot-Motwani, J. (1993). *Global Indian Diaspora: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. New York: Global Organization of People of Indian Origin.
- Mukherjee, Debjani. (2000). The Other In My Space: South Asian American Women Negotiating Hyphenated Identities. In Bolo! Bolo!: *A Collection of Writings by Second Generation South Asians Living in North America*. The Kitchen Table Collective (Eds.), pp. 278-289. Mississauga: South Asian Professionals' Networking Association.

- Okamura, Jonathan Y., (2003). Asian American Studies in the Age of Transnationalism: Diaspora, Race, Community. *Amerasia Journal*, 29(2), pp. 171-193.
- Ong, Paul M. (N.D.) *The State of Asian Pacific America: Transforming Race Relations- A Public Policy Report*. LEAP Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center.
- Ong, P.M., & Leung, L. (2003). Asian Pacific American Demographics. In *The New Face of Asian Pacific America: Numbers, Diversity, and Change in the 21st Century*. Eric Lai & Dennis Arguelles (Eds.), pp. 7-16. San Francisco: AsianWeek.
- Organization of Chinese Americans (May 29, 2001). Congressman Wu Denied Entry to DOE. Press Release. (<http://www.oceanatl.org/news/pr05292001b.html>).
- Organization of Chinese Americans (January 10, 2003). OCA Press Statement on Shaquille O'Neal Radio Interview. Press Release. (<http://www.oceanatl.org/bin/htmls/00391.3.5711356852900012534>).
- Organization of Chinese Americans (April 18, 2002). Asian Pacific American Community Outraged with Irresponsible and Derogatory Image. Press Release. (<http://www.oceanatl.org/bin/htmls/02228.6.2070248115400019738>).
- Pike, G.R. & Askew, J.W. (1990). The Impact of Fraternity or Sorority Membership on Academic Involvement and Learning Outcomes. *NASPA Journal*, 28(1), pp. 13-19.
- Patton, Michael Quinn (1980). *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Patton, Michael Quinn (1987). *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Phinney, Jean (1990). Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), pp. 499-514.
- Phinney, J., & Alipuria, L.L. (1990). Ethnic Identity in College Students from Four Ethnic Groups. *Journal of Adolescence*, 13(2), pp. 171-183.
- Prashad, Vijay (2000). *The Karma of Brown Folk*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pursley, Garrick B. (2003). Thinking Diversity, Rethinking Race: Toward a Transformative Concept of Diversity in Higher Education. *Texas Law Review*, 82(1), pp. 153-199.

- Rayaprol, Aparna (1997). *Negotiating Identities: Women in the Indian Diaspora*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Radhakrishnan, R. (1996). *Diasporic Meditations: Between Home and Location*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Reed-Danahay, Deborah (2002). Turning Points and Textual Strategies in Ethnographic Writing. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(4), pp. 421-425.
- Reisberg, Leo (1999, May 21). As Asian Enrollments Diversify, So Too Do Students' Demands. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 45(37), p. A42.
- Reisberg, Leo (2000, Jan. 7). Ethnic and Multicultural Fraternities are Booming on Many Campuses. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46(18), p. A60.
- Scheurich, James J. (1997). *Research Method in the Postmodern*. London: Falmer Press.
- Scheurich, James J. (2002). *Anti-Racist Scholarship: An Advocacy*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Shah, Purvi (1997). Redefining the Home: How Community Elites Silence Feminist Activism. In *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*. Sonia Shah (Ed.), pp. 46-56. Boston: South End Press.
- Shankar, Lavina Dhingra, & Balgopal, Pallassana R. (2001). South Asian Immigrants Before 1950: The Formation of Ethnic, Symbolic, and Group Identity. *Amerasia Journal*, 27(1), pp. 55-85.
- Shankar, L.D. & Srikanth, R. (1998). *A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Smith-Maddox, Renée & Solórzano, Daniel G. (2002). Using Critical Race Theory, Paulo Freire's Problem-Posing Method, and Case Study Research to Confront Race and Racism in Education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), pp. 66-84.
- Sodowsky, G.R., Kwan, K.K., & Pannu, R. (1995). Ethnic Identity of Asians in the United States. In *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, J.G. Ponterotto, J.M. Casas, L.A. Suzuki, and C.M. Alexander (Eds.), pp. 123-154. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Solórzano, Daniel G. & Yosso, Tara J. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), pp. 23-44.

- Spencer, Martin E. (December 1994). Multiculturalism, "Political Correctness," and the Politics of Identity. *Sociological Forum*, 9(4), pp. 547-567.
- Stake, Robert E. (2000). Case Studies. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition*, Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonne S. (Eds.), pp. 435-454. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stage, F. K. (January 1991). Common Elements of Theory: A Framework for College Student Development. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32(1), pp. 56-61.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory (2nd Ed.)*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Subcommittee Hearing on H.R. 2128: Equal Opportunity Act of 1995. United States Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on the Constitution. (1995, December 7). Testimony, December 5, 1995, Frank H. Wu, Professor, Howard University School of Law, Retrieved November 12, 1999 from the <http://www.house.gov/judiciary/22329.htm>
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (1990). *Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice (2nd Ed.)*. New York: Wiley.
- Suzuki, Bob H. (Spring 2002). Revisiting the Model Minority Stereotype. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 21-32.
- Tamaki, Julie (1997, May 19). Stereotypes Mask Struggle of Some Asian Americans; Education: Although Perceived as Model Students, Many Members of the Diverse Minority Groups are at Risk in the Classroom, Report Says. *Los Angeles Times*, p. B1.
- Takaki, Ronald (1993). *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Takaki, Ronald (1998). *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans (updated and revised)*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Tatum, Beverly (1997). *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* New York: Basic Books.
- Takeda, Okiyoshi (June 2001). One Year After the Sit-In: Asian American Students' Identities and their Support for Asian American Studies. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 4(2), pp. 147-164.

- Toren, Christina (1996). Ethnography: Theoretical Background. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods*. John T.E. Richardson (Ed.), pp. 102-112. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Thrupkaew, Noy (2002, April 8). The Myth of the Model Minority: Southeast Asians Were Stereotyped as Bolstered by Strong Values. But When Immigrants Face Grim Economic and Social Conditions, Values Are Not Enough. *The American Prospect*, 13(7), pp. 38-41.
- Tuan, Mia (1998). *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Tuan, Mia (2002). Second-Generation Asian American Identity: Clues from the Asian Ethnic Experience. In *The Second Generation: Ethnic Identity Among Asian Americans*. Pyong Gap Min (Ed.), pp. 209-237. New York: AltaMira Press.
- Tyson, Cynthia (2002). A Response to “Coloring Epistemology: Are Our Research Epistemologies Racially Biased?”. In *Anti-Racist Scholarship: An Advocacy*. James Joseph Scheurich (Ed.), pp. 74-77. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Uba, Laura (1994). *Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Uba, Laura (2002). *A Postmodern Psychology of Asian Americans: Creating Knowledge of a Racial Minority*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Vaid, Jyotsna (1999/2000). Beyond a Space of Our Own: South Asian Women’s Groups in the U.S. *Amerasia Journal*, 25(3), pp. 111-126.
- Vasquez, M. J. T. (November 1988). Research, Practice and Ethnic Minorities: Applications of and Comments on “New Scholarship on Women.” *Journal of College Student Development*, 29(6), pp. 504-510.
- Villenas, Sofia (1998). The Colonizer/Colonized Chicana Ethnographer: Identity, Marginalization, and Co-optation in the Field. In *Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Mary Rogers (Ed.), pp. 172-188. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Visweswaran, Kamala (1993). Predicaments of the Hyphen. In *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*, The Women of South Asian Descent Collective (Eds.), pp. 301-312. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Whitt, Elizabeth (1994). I Can Be Anything!: Student Leadership in Three Women’s Colleges. *Journal of College Student Development*, 35(), pp. 198-207.

- Wong, P., Manvi, M., & Wong, T.H. (1995). Asiacentrism and Asian American Studies? *Amerasia Journal*, 21(1 & 2), pp. 137-147.
- Woo, Deborah (1997). Asian Americans in Higher Education: Issues of Diversity and Engagement. *Race, Gender & Class*, 4(3), pp. 122-143.
- Wu, Frank H. (2002). *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wu, Jean (2002). Teaching "Who Killed Vincent Chin": 1991 and 2001. *Amerasia Journal*, 28(3), pp. 13-23.
- Wu, Jean & Song, Min. (2000). *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Yang, Raymond K., Byers, Steven R., Ahuna, Linda M., Castro, Kimberly S. (September 2002). Asian American Students' Use of a University Student Affairs Office. *College Student Journal*, 36(3), pp. 448-471.
- Yeh, Christine & Huang, Karen (1996). The Collectivistic Nature of Ethnic Identity Development Among Asian American College Students. *Adolescence*, 31(123), pp. 645-662.
- Yeh, Christine & Wang, Yu-Wei (2000). Asian American Coping Attitudes, Sources, and Practices: Implications for Indigenous Counseling Strategies. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(1), pp.94-101.
- Yeh, Theresa Ling (Spring 2002). Asian American College Students Who are Educationally at Risk. *New Directions for Student Services*, Issue 97, pp. 61-71.
- Yu, Henry (2000). On a Stage Built by Others: Creating an Intellectual History of Asian Americans. *Amerasia Journal*, 26(1), pp. 141-161.

Vita

Mamta Motwani Accapadi is the daughter of Bharti Motwani and Gul Motwani, and the wife of Jos Manuel Accapadi. She was born in Jackson Heights, New York, on December 1, 1974. After completing high school at Jersey Village High School in Houston, TX, Mamta began her collegiate experience at The University of Texas at Austin, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Microbiology in 1995, and her Master of Education in Higher Education Administration in 1998. She later worked at Schreiner College as Associate Dean of Students, before returning back to The University of Texas at Austin to pursue a doctoral degree.

She worked at The University of Texas in multiple capacities, as the University Ombudsman, Orientation Program Graduate Assistant, Researcher for the Center for Social Work Research, and Graduate Assistant for the Multicultural Information Center. Currently, Mamta serves as the Assistant Director of the Multicultural Information Center at The University of Texas at Austin.

Permanent address: 2500 Avenue N, Austin, TX 78727

This dissertation was typed by Mamta Motwani Accapadi.