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# Negotiating cultural transmission : Asian Indian immigrant parents and children

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NEGOTIATING CULTURAL TRANSMISSION: ASIAN INDIAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS  
AND CHILDREN

by

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Master of Arts in Psychology, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India, 2001

A thesis presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Art

in the program of

Psychology

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2009

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## Abstract

Negotiating Cultural Transmission: Asian Indian Immigrant Parents and Children

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Master of Arts in the Program of Psychology, 2009

Ryerson University

The study examines parenting experiences of Asian Indian immigrant parents and their second-generation adult children to understand how immigrant families negotiate differences and similarities between cultural values and beliefs within the family and the dominant society at large. Participants in the study included seven first generation couples and their adult children who were born and brought up in Canada. Both parents and one child per family were interviewed separately using open ended in-depth interviews. The analysis of the interviews resulted in certain core themes: (1) Contextual factors; (2) Notions of family; and (3) Parenting as a process. The parenting experience of immigrant parents and children is embedded within a socio-cultural context where cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation both serve as an important role in the adaptation and adjustment of these families. The study highlights the need for a cultural and developmental perspective to understand experiences in the context of immigration.

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## Dedication

To my mother, father and brother, there are no words to describe what you mean to me.

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## Introduction

Immigration today is one of the single most powerful transformations impacting societies across the world (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Triandafyllidou, 2000). It is most often not only an individual's decision, but a decision that involves a whole family. It is typically a decision made with the hope of a better future. Adaptation of immigrant families following relocation as well as their achievements in the future are reflective of not only inclusive, well-thought policies, but also a willingness of the host society to engage in questions and issues pertaining to different ethnocultural groups.

As one of the major immigrant receiving nations (Statistics Canada, 2008; McDaniel, 2004) the future strength of Canada lies in improving adjustment and maintaining resilience in immigrant families and children. Thus, it becomes important to understand how family processes get challenged within the context of immigration. How do family dynamics change in the process of integration to the host society? How do children and parents experience immigration and integration? Is it different? Are family values and practices informed by indigenous cultures of natal countries a source of strength for immigrant families? What are some of these strengths, which immigrant families bring with them? These are all questions that have enormous impacts.

The objective of this research was to develop an understanding of the role played by culture in the parenting experiences of immigrant families. Of particular interest was the process of negotiation which parents and children go through as they are adapting to living in a world informed by beliefs and value-systems of their culture of origin on one hand, and western society on the other. The parenting models developed within North

America have the individuality of the growing child as a central emphasis, often ignoring the relationality which is central to many eastern traditions of living (Kakar, 1981).

Where theoretical orientations modeled on an individualistic way of living make salient notions of personal freedom, internal locus of control and assertiveness, there is often little attention paid to collectivistic preferences for obedience, respect, notion of duty, obligation, submission of personal desires for the sake of significant others, and a hierarchical organization of society.

The present study explores the lived experiences of Asian Indian immigrant families. It is a study of parenting stories, an attempt to construct an experiential understanding of the role played by culture in parenting. The aim in that sense is to understand how immigrant parents and their second generation children look back at their experiences of living and negotiating within a cultural world of beliefs, practices, and value-systems. Keeping this objective in mind the following literature review has been helpful in guiding and examining this area of interest.

### *Immigration*

*Acculturation.* The experience of acculturation is influenced by a number of factors. Berry (2005) argues that individuals belonging to minority groups, when free to choose, can acculturate in one of four ways. They can choose to absorb themselves in the dominant culture at the cost of their own cultural identity (assimilation). They can also choose to uphold their culture by avoiding any interaction with the dominant society (separation). They can actively seek preservation of their own cultural heritage while at the same time maintaining interaction with the dominant group (integration) and finally there can be a complete lack of interest towards maintaining a cultural identity as well as

relations with members of the dominant group (marginalization). Where the earlier viewpoints on acculturation have assumed it to be an independent experience of the immigrant choosing to adapt/not adapt/integrate to the ways of the dominant society, much recent work presents a more multidimensional viewpoint, pointing out the situational factors impacting the acculturation experience (Berry, 2005; Rudmin, 2003).

What is important has been recognition of this experience as a process, as much socio-cultural in nature as it is political (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). One key recent area of interest within acculturation research has focused on the changes impacting family functioning during immigration (Berry, 2005). Trying to understand these experiences from the perspective of the immigrant families is a vital step in engaging with issues confronting diverse ethnic populations. Culture is ever changing. To portray its intricate nature requires sensitivity to the processes whereby people make meaning in life. Negotiating bicultural socialization, particularly in the context of immigrating to a new country, is not an easy process (Nwadiora & Mcadoo, 1996).

*Family.* Immigration is perhaps one of the most challenging transitions a family can face as a unit. Some common stressors related to migration include loss of close relationships, uncertainty about decision to immigrate, changes in financial status, loss of lifestyle, country and roots, change in cultural norms (Bennett & Colleen, 1997), changes in the marital relationship (Shamai & Lev, 1999), employment (Aycan & Berry, 1996), and ability to communicate (Nwadiora & Mcadoo, 1996), among many others. Although these stressors can often overwhelm and throw one off-balance, one's ability to flexibly select appropriate coping behaviours can help one see the world as ordered and predictable, and crises as manageable and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1988).

There are stressors, yet there are also processes, which often help to facilitate our adaption and adjustment to them. Although the idea of individual resilience has been around for a long time, an increasing number of researchers have begun to identify resilience as a resource of the family (DeFrain, 1999; Haan, Hawley & Deal, 2002; Jackson, Brown & Govia, 2007). Processes contributing to a sense of meaning and confidence, however, may vary depending on the socio-cultural-historical contexts in which a family exists (Hawley, 2000; Scott, 2001). Resilience is not a static construct based on a set of qualities found in some families and not in others. As Hawley (2000) states, it is a path which families often follow when dealing with challenges and stressors in life. It is therefore important to look for resilience not only in the face of challenges, but as a process, a potential strength a family may display over time (Hawley, 2000).

*Resilience.* Some adaptational systems that often help people in the face of stressors are emotional support among family members, open and honest communication, exploration of ethnicity, religion and spirituality, and family rituals and belief systems (Carranza, 2007; Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007; Greeff & Human, 2004). Perhaps, the greatest threat to families and communities are adversities that undermine these basic protective processes. Family values and belief systems play a very important role in cushioning the effect of transitions and changing circumstances on the family unit (Silberberg, 2001). An important challenge for immigrants developing constructive family practices is the cultural differences they encounter in family practices within the host society. Particularly difficult for an immigrant parent is the process of bridging the gap between the socialization and parenting he/she experienced as a child, and the practices and beliefs encountered in the dominant culture. As notable as these differences

may be, recognizing many of them as significant sources of strengths for immigrant families can help provide crucial systems of support during the challenging period of adaptation and acculturation.

### *Culture and Family*

According to Statistics Canada (2008), the last 100 years has seen the arrival of more than 13 million immigrants to Canada. From 1996 to 2001, the visible minority population saw a growth of 25% compared to the 4 % growth in the general population. According to the ethnic diversity and immigration trends, 71 % of immigrants who came from 1991 to 2001 rated their ancestry as important to self-identity, along with 57% second generation Canadians (born in Canada with at least one foreign born parent) and 44% of third generation (born in Canada to Canadian-born parents) (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Families in multicultural societies face unique challenges. In such societies each person may be able to selectively identify with a number of cultural subgroups. Thus, it is important to understand culture not in terms of ethnicity, but as consisting of many variables. A narrow focus on ethnicity often attempts to examine all human diversity using a much simplified framework of relatively homogenous ethnocultural groups which share certain patterns of thoughts, behaviors, feelings, customs, and rituals (Falicov, 1995). According to Falicov (1995), a multidimensional framework for examining the role of culture highlights a number of factors, such as the ecological context of the family, and values and belief systems guiding interactions within the family, rural or suburban settings, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, migration and stage of acculturation. There may be varying

degrees to which families may consider certain relationships such as husband-wife, parent-child, kinships etc. as central to their functioning, often leading to different patterns of communication and norm expectations across families (Falicov, 1995; Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal, 1988).

Rogers and Sebald (1962) make a distinction between the nature of “familism” (p. 26) or relationships in both nuclear and extended families. Where in nuclear families “familism” includes relationships between the spouses and children, “familism” in extended families incorporates relationships within a kinship network spanning two or more generations. Coining the term ‘Family Integration’ and ‘Kinship Orientation,’ they state that the extent to which family members are oriented towards each other’s needs is separate from the extent to which family members are oriented towards the expectations of their kinship reference group. Parenting children can be a huge challenge for families hailing from cultures rooted in strong kinship networks as a result of loss of close relationships during relocation. In addition, the host society may also differ in expectations around family relationships, values, and behaviors, which can be a challenging negotiation for immigrant parents.

Another factor that may contribute to an additional disjuncture for parents socializing children amidst value-systems different from their own natal cultures is that children may often adapt more quickly to the mainstream society than the parents (Glassman & Eisikovits, 2006; Ying, 1999). Different rates of acculturation by parents and children, as Ying (1999) notes, may be associated with intergenerational and intercultural conflict within immigrant families. In a study of parental attitudes towards childrearing among five ethnic groups of mothers, Jambunathan, Burts and Pierce (2000)

found support for the idea that notions of optimal parenting styles require consideration of cultural factors. 182 mothers from five ethnic backgrounds (52 European Americans, 43 Asian Americans, 33 African Americans, 31 Hispanics and 23 Asian Indians) participated in the study. The parenting attitudes of mothers were measured using the Adolescent-Adult Parenting Inventory which has four subscales: Reversing Parent-Child Family Roles, Lack of Empathic Awareness of Children's Needs, Inappropriate Developmental Expectations of Children and Strong Parental Beliefs in the Use of Corporal Punishment.

The results showed that the five cultural groups differed in their attitude on each of the 4 subscales. Asian American, Asian Indian, and African American mothers engaged in more role reversals and had a lower empathetic awareness of their children's needs than European American and Hispanic mothers. Asian American, Asian Indian, and Hispanic mothers in comparison to European American and African American mothers had less appropriate expectations of their children. Asian American and African American mothers also favored use of corporal punishment more than European American and Hispanic mothers. Although overall European American mothers were found to express more appropriate levels of the four attitudes Jambunathan, Burts and Pierce (2000) point out that this more positive rating was because the instrument used to assess attitudes was developed and based on research normed with European American samples. Hence, the differences observed among minority parents need not be viewed deviant or deficient. In addition, many differences in ethnic minority parenting attitudes also required consideration of the multigenerational family system and availability of an extended family network during parenting and socialization of children.

However, as much as immigration is a difficult process of transition for families, research provides evidence of many strengths within immigrant families. Cultural belief systems emphasizing education, personal effort, a sense of responsibility and obligation towards family have been identified to have a positive impact on children leading to greater academic achievement (Fuligni, 1997; Fuligni, 1998; Hess, Chih-Mei & McDevitt, 1987; Kao & Tienda, 1995). In a study by Fuligni (1997) participating students comprised of tenth, sixth and eighth grades of two high schools and two middle schools in California. The study included 1,100 students with Latino, East Asian, Filipino and European background.

The study recorded the students' grades in mathematics and English along with assessing students' perception of parental attitude towards academics, peer support for academics and adolescents' academic attitude along with their study time. A series of multiple regressions were conducted to examine the academic achievement of students from these immigrant families. The study showed that adolescents from immigrant families despite coming from families where English was not frequently spoken and parents had limited exposure to the education system received higher grades than children from native families. Immigrant children seem not only to be coping well, but also surpassing native children in their adjustment and achievement. Neither the education of the parents nor their professional status contributed much to this difference. A much stronger correlate of this academic achievement was the emphasis on education that was shared by students, their peers and strongly supported by their parents.

Some common adaptive strategies of many ethnic minority groups according to Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan and Buriel (1990) is using family members as support,

being flexible in family responsibilities e.g., children caring for younger siblings, flexibility with regards to different cultural norms, following ancestral religious practices, spiritual belief-systems, and communal notions of self linked to values of harmony and loyalty to family and society. These adaptive strategies often have a positive impact on children, resulting in a greater ability to negotiate differences between ethnic and dominant societal value-systems (Harrison et al, 1990; Kim & Omizo, 2006).

### *Culture and Parenting*

When studying social behavior it is important to understand the role played by culture (Verma, 1987). According to Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal (1988), parenting value systems in the West characterized by independence, detachment, and privacy for the child can differ from collectivistic cultures of the East formed around notions of interdependence, close involvement in the child's life, and obligation at the cost of personal freedom. The role of culture within the context of immigration becomes even more salient as many of the family values experienced by children are the cultural values of parents (Hynie, Lalonde, & Lee, 2006).

Although in recent years, the terms western and eastern, individualism and collectivism as markers of a distinct cultural identity have come under critical scrutiny a desire to objectively account for human diversity still remains a focus. Gjerde (2004) uses culture as a political and historical construct with power dynamics playing a central role in both our public and subjective representations of what constitutes culture. He further proposes the idea of cultural concerns or themes which may influence to various degrees how people think, act and feel. These concerns which are located within various contextual and institutional forces may also be interpreted differently according to

people. Culture therefore is best experienced as something fluid and emergent constantly changed and sustained by people in meaningful ways within the political forces constituting their lives (Gjerde, 2004).

Cultural traditions, rituals may help create a sense of comfort and security for immigrants such that the familiarity established in daily life may provide a reaffirmation of ethnic identity. Highlighting the cultural transition taking place in successive generations within immigrant families, Glassman and Eisikovits (2006) note that traditional knowledge structures continue to guide the parenting of immigrant mothers, giving them a sense of confidence in their self-identity, and enhancing their ability to deal with the cultural transition they experience upon immigration.

Conducting 24 semi-structured interviews with three generations of women of Moroccan origin- mothers who immigrated to Israel in 1950s and had children both before and after immigration; their daughters who came to Israel as children and married there; and their granddaughter who were born in Israel and become mothers in the 1990s, the study examined experiences of intercultural transition in child rearing and parenting. Highlighting the continued role played by traditional systems of knowledge in many domains of child rearing such as feeding babies, guidance of daughters in their role as housewives and mothers and so on, the study stresses both preservation and change in the models of mothering for immigrant families. Maintaining cultural heritage, as Settles (2001) points out, may often become a “psychological mooring” (p. 630) for many immigrant parents. Cultural resources may play a mediating role in reducing the impact of caregiving stress experienced by immigrant families (Gupta & Pillai, 2002).

Cultural transmission by parents, however, is not a simple process of socializing children according to parental expectations. Children are not passive receivers; they develop their identity in a state of constant interaction with their school, peers, family and the community (Cheung & Kuo, 2000). Understanding this process of negotiation between different value-systems is important when exploring issues of identity and adjustment in children and immigrant families.

### *Asian Indian Parenting*

*Immigration patterns.* Canadians of South Asian origin constitute one of the largest non-European ethnic groups of young adults and children in Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2009), between 1996 and 2001 people reporting a South Asian origin rose by 33% in comparison to a 4% growth in the population. Indians constitute 16.4% of the Asian community in North America (McDaniel, 2004). According to the Canadian census report in 2001 Canada allowed entry to 27, 812 Indians making them the second-largest immigrant group within the country (McDaniel, 2004). The majority of this ethnic group remains concentrated in Toronto or Vancouver. One of most cited reasons for settling in Toronto is the established social support networks in the city (Statistics Canada, 2009).

The beginning of Indian emigration can be traced back to the 1800s. The Sikh immigrants employed by the British colonial government with job postings in China and Malay States were the first few people from India to arrive in Canada (Chandrasekhar, 1986). Labour demands in British Columbia and Vancouver and promising pictures of a better future played an important role in this first wave of immigration (Chandrasekhar, 1986). Economic demands in India were also a major driving force. Threats of famine,

long periods of exploitation under the British colonial rule, overcrowding, along with reduced fertility of agricultural land within the country played a significant role in encouraging this first group of Sikh peasants to immigrate (Chandrasekhar, 1986). With the independence of India in 1947, the 1950s saw a shift to a quota system based on race which allowed admission of certain number of people per year (Chandrasekhar, 1986).

Unlike the earlier time period, the 1960s -1970s marked significant changes in the immigration regulations. Where earlier restrictions on immigration were based on national origin, race, color or religion the emphasis now was on education, training and skills as the main criteria for admission. According to policy statements issued by the government of Prime Minister Lester Pearson in 1966, Canada's relatively small population in the absence of newcomers was unlikely to progress much (McDaniel, 2004). Hence, immigrants were important to Canada's economic development. Changes in the immigration acts introduced in 1962 and 1967 (Basran, 1993; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981), mainly in response to the demands of the Canadian economy, allowed entry of a section of highly educated professional group of Asian Indian immigrants (Basran, 1993; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981) to Canada. In addition, the new regulations also facilitated migration of families during this time.

This post World War II movement of people from India to Canada again had dreams of better financial prospects at its core. There were very few immigrants who came to North America before 1965, one of the major reasons being the long distance between South Asia and North America (McDaniel, 2004). However, this changed as North America began to prosper in the 1960s (McDaniel, 2004). Improved means of communication and transportation made travel easy (Chandrasekhar, 1986). For many

well-educated, upper-middle-class, skilled and technically trained people in India immigration and work experience in the west meant better career opportunities both abroad as well as in the home country upon return (Chandrasekhar, 1986).

According to Anderson and Lee (2005) the 1960s was also a period when countries located on the Pacific Rim had a large number of technical, medical and managerial personnel whose professional qualification and relatively low cost made them a desirable workforce in the North American labor market. Although immigration resulted in a disruption of the extended family structure, these new immigrants continued to maintain close connections with relatives back home, in addition to establishing surrogate kinship networks with other Asian Indian immigrants in Canada (Chandrasekhar, 1986). Many of these immigrant families at present have adult children who are married or new parents.

The Bengali immigrant community which came to Canada during this time period is part of this group of highly skilled and educated professionals. Even though this community may not be living in close physical proximity to each other, it is relatively homogeneous in class and social relationships. One of the interesting features of this community is its cohesiveness in spite of a seemingly dispersed nature to an outsider (Chandrasekhar, 1986). Since most of these migrants came from upper and middle class homes, spoke fluent English and possessed a certain level of familiarity with Western ways of living, they quickly adapted to Canadian value systems at school and at work. However, they continued to hold on to their traditional values and practices within family relationships.

*Parenting style.* The literature supports that Asian Indian immigrants continue to adhere to many value systems and behavioral patterns from their home culture. They actively seek to facilitate the development of an ethnic identity among children by providing conditions for cultural transmission and retention, such as, participation in cultural/religious associations, speaking ethnic language, eating ethnic food, watching ethnic movies, practicing religion, interacting with people from same ethnic group, encouraging familiarity with ethnic folklore, myths, social customs, and visits to the country of origin ( Dhruvarajan, 1993; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). In addition, there are also competing cultural expectations and a pressure to change (Patel, Power & Bhavnagri, 1996) which these families face as a result of influences from the host society.

Many customs and rituals along with the world view projected by the Hindu religion particularly has been found to play an important role in maintaining cultural heritage in these immigrant families (Dhruvarajan, 1993). In a study by Dhruvrajan (1993) data with the help of questionnaires was collected from 324 members of the Hindu Society of Manitoba in 1985. Of the 243 respondents, 101 men and 94 women were first generation immigrants and remaining 48 were children of these immigrants. The four independent variables in study were Religiosity, Length of Stay, Occupation and Education and the two dependent variable categories consisted of normative and behavioral aspects of ethnic culture such as Patriarchal vs. Egalitarian norms and Familistis vs. Individualistic norms. A multiple linear regression analysis was done to check whether the independent variables could explain variation in adherence to normative and behavioral aspects of ethnic culture. The findings of the study show that religiosity played a significant role in explaining ethnic cultural retention and

transmission. Lower education, occupational status and a shorter length of stay in Canada also further contributed to the process of cultural retention and perpetuation.

Research highlights the strong emphasis placed on the group and social obligations within the Asian Indian family. Where marriage in individualistic societies emphasizes individual desires and preferences, marriage is seen as a process of linking families within collectivist cultures (Goodwin & Cramer, 2000). The principal goal in such communities is the preservation of the community and the family, rather than the individual. In spite of modernization, the joint family remains the ideal form of family organization in India. According to Kakar and Kakar (2007), a joint family is one in which “brothers remain together after marriage and bring their wives into the parental household...In addition to this core group there may be others who are either permanent or temporary residents in the household: widowed or abandoned sisters and aunts, or distant male relatives.”(p. 9).

The few distinctive features of Indian families, Kakar and Kakar (2007) further elaborate, are maintenance of family integrity as a higher goal than individual development where “a young Indian neither seeks a radical demarcation from the generation of his parents nor feels compelled to overthrow his authority.” (p.15). In addition, there exists a hierarchical family structure marked by filial respect, compliance, and maternal nurturance. According to the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project which surveyed sixty-two countries, South Asia is the most hierarchical culture with the greatest degree of separation between people based on power, authority and prestige (see in Kakar & Kakar, 2007). It also stands out in the degree to which people are caring, altruistic, generous and kind, being

one of the least assertive cultures that places a high value on loyalty towards family and friends (Kakar & Kakar, 2007).

One of the challenges in closely examining the family relationships and childhood experience in India is the paucity of developmental psychology studies on child rearing practices (Sharma, 2003). In addition, there is the frequent misconceptualization of socialization practises based on Western individualistic values and imposition of a developmental pathway for children based on autonomy, separation and the mother-child dyad central to nuclear families, but alien to the socio-cultural fabric of the country (Sharma, 2003; Kakar, 1981). The interpersonal world of relationships is built upon a socio-cultural matrix, and hence it is important to pay attention to the culturally guided frameworks for development (Sharma, 2003). This has important implications for parenting within immigrant families, where socialization for many parents often becomes a balancing act between two cultural frameworks.

*Negotiating cultural transmission.* Parenting in the context of immigration is clearly influenced by a number of factors. Given the large number of children from immigrant families, questions related to transmission of cultural values, belief systems, and retention and promotion of a sense of ethnic identity (Inman, Howard, Beaumont & Walker, 2007; Phinney, 1989) are central to parenting and socialization of children. Inman et al. (2007) interviewed 16 first generation Asian Indian mothers and fathers about the impact of immigration on retention of their ethnic identity and ability to encourage it in their second-generation children. Elaborating on the role played by certain parenting strategies and values in transmitting an ethnic identity to their children along

with specific challenges to this process, the study highlights various cultural and identity issues pertaining to parenting within immigrant families.

In the context of immigration, the essential challenge in many ways stems from relearning the environment and making behavioral and psychological changes to fit with the altered conditions in the new society (Sinha, 1990). Along with modifying oneself to adapt to the changed circumstances, maintaining a sense of continuity with respect to the culture of origin, has been found to be much valued by immigrant parents (Dhruvarajan, 1993; Inman, Howard, Beaumont & Walker, 2007; Patel, Power & Bhavnagri, 1996; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). It is this very process of negotiation that was the focus of this research.

In summary, the above literature review suggests that it is important to understand the role played by culture in the parenting and development of children within any family. These cultural influences become especially salient for families upon immigration to a different country. Where cultural differences in beliefs, rituals, values and traditions between the natal society and the host society involves a challenging process of adjustment and change for immigrant parents, located within many such ethnic cultural influences are also indigenous sources of strength which may facilitate a successful adaptation. Promoting healthy development is as important as preventing problems (Scott, 2001).

It is within this strength based theoretical framework that this study attempts to find grounding. The intent of the research is to understand resilience within the context of immigration and acculturation. There are sources of strengths in every culture and very often they stem from everyday beliefs and ways of functioning that provide people hope

and meaning (Dossa, 2002; Stevenson & Renard, 1993). The research seeks to reflect this need to understand and tap in to these ordinary life processes, which become extraordinary in the face of stressors. The strength perspective (Saleebey, 1996) the research draws on aims to create valid spaces for experiences, which have not been sufficiently valued or credited within existing literature on the lives of immigrant families.

Although numerous instances can be found in the literature of the adverse effects of immigration on families and children (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Beiser, Hou, Hyman & Tousignant, 2002; Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004; Eldering & Knorth, 1998; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Wu & Chao, 1995; Ying, Lee & Tsai, 2007) limited experiences portraying resilience (Carranza, 2007; Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007; Inman et al., 2007; Silberberg, 2001; White, 2006) exist within the acculturation discourse. Qualitative research thus plays an important role in bringing to light the lived experience of immigrant families, along with the sources of strength that define and sustain them in the course of a challenging adjustment in a new country.

### Method

It is by our constant and changing interaction with a socio-cultural world that we attach and construct meaning out of our experiences (Sinha, 1990; Taylor & Ussher, 2001). The project is mindful of this contextualization. In addition, the research acknowledges the subjectivity which both the researcher and the participants lend to their accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and makes an attempt to use it to inform and enrich this study. It was not the purpose of this project to prove or disprove hypotheses informed by

existing theoretical frameworks; rather the attempt was to seek out the experiences of people from which an understanding might be developed.

### *Participants*

The participants in this project consisted of 7 Asian Indian couples who had immigrated to Canada between 1960s and the 1970s. This was period of time when there was a large influx of immigrants from India because of vital changes in the immigration regulations. These immigrants, many of whom either came to Canada from India or from other western countries, belonged to a homogenous group of technically trained professional people equal in terms of social class and education level. For most couples the husbands came to Canada seeking better employment opportunities, and were later joined by their wives. Most couples had an arranged marriage in India and began their married life in Canada. Since the focus of project was to understand the role played by culture in the experiences of these families, one cultural subgroup of immigrants, from Bengal, were chosen for this study. The Bengali community who came during this time period is a homogenous group of well inter-connected immigrants within Toronto (Chandrasekhar, 1986).

All parents at the time of the interview were between the ages of 52 and 68 years. The couples were born and raised in India and immigrated to Canada between 1966 and 1979. All of the couples had two children, except one couple who had one child. One adult child was interviewed separately from each family. All children had grown up in Canada (five were born here, two came at the age of 6 years and 1 month respectively). Three male children and four female children were interviewed for the study. The adult

children were in the age range from 19 to 33 years. Out of all the children who were interviewed, two were young parents and four were married.

The participants were recruited using a reputational sampling method, a common method employed in community research. As an Asian Indian, I used my network of acquaintances to recruit participant families: parents and one adult child from each family. The researcher did not have a longstanding relationship with the participants and they were free to decline participation in the study. Each participant family was then requested to refer additional people who might be interested in the study. The researcher introduced herself and explained that the objective of the study was to learn about their experiences of parenting (parents) and growing up in an immigrant family (children) in a very general open-ended interview. An example of an open-ended question was given during the conversation.

They were also informed about the voluntary nature of the study and the confidentiality procedures in the research. It was ensured that the families knew that the interviews with the parents and the children would take place separately, and would not be shared with the other. At this point if the family member with whom the researcher spoke to showed interest an appointment was setup. Some individuals declined to participate. For a few families, the parents participated in the study however, the children declined to participate for personal reasons. Because of this, data from these families has not been included in this study.

Most of the interviews based on the convenience of the participants were conducted at the home of the participants. Only one interview was conducted at the Psychology research laboratory on Bond Street. At the beginning of each meeting the

objective and confidentially procedures of the study were explained to the participants. They were then given the consent form to read. After the participants had read the consent form, the key areas were once again highlighted by the investigator. The participants were reminded about the volunteer nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study.

The overall characteristics of the seven families interviewed for this study are as follows. The age range for the fathers was 61 to 68 years (average age 64.2 years) and the mothers' age range was 52 to 62 years (average age 58 years). The age range for the adult children from each family was 19 to 33 years (average age 28.1 years). All participants were university graduates. All fathers were technical professionals, mostly engineers, and there was one teacher; 5 were retired, while 2 were still working. Among the mothers, 4 were retired from work, one mother had always been a homemaker, and 2 were still working. Among the adult children from each family, 2 sons were working as engineers, 1 daughter was an engineer by training, but was currently a stay at home mother of two young children, two daughters were accountants, one son was a pharmacist and one daughter was attending graduate school. Out of all the children interviewed, 3 children were first born, 3 children were second born, and 1 child was an only child.

### *Interview Structure*

*Pilot Interviews.* Prior to the interviews, the researcher conducted pilot interviews with 3 immigrant parents and 2 Canadian-born adult children. The purpose of the pilot interview was to practice the open-ended interviewing style, as well as refine the initial set of interview questions which had been developed for the pilot interviews (Appendix C). Based on the pilot interviews, questions were revised and reframed. Questions 4, 5, 8,

9, 10 in the pilot interviews were reframed for the final interview schedule. The questions were broad and general giving the participants enough freedom while responding.

*Interviews.* Participants were informed that the interviews would take 1 to 2 hours. All the participants were interviewed in their home except for two adult children. One child was interviewed at the Psychology research laboratory at Bond Street. The other because of scheduling conflicts preferred to be interviewed over the phone.

The father and the mother from each family were interviewed together while the child was interviewed separately. At the time of the interview the participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns before they signed the consent form. Only after the consent forms had been signed were the interviews conducted. A copy of the consent form was also given to the parents and the children. The interviews were open-ended (see Appendix C). The interviews were audio-recorded using a high quality digital recorder. I personally transcribed each interview. All the transcriptions were reviewed to check for any errors. A copy of their interview transcript was sent to the participants. The participants were contacted once all the interviews had been transcribed and a copy of the transcripts were sent to the mailing addresses provided by the participants.

*Interview process.* At the beginning of the interview an attempt was made to develop rapport with the participants by asking them a bit about their background. Both the parents were interviewed together. For parents, questions inquiring when and how they came to Canada and for children, questions asking when and where they were born were helpful in this regard. An attempt was made to keep the interview conversational and informal. The participants were reminded that the questions posed were in a loose format and if they wished to share something additional at any point, they were free to do

so. The order of the questions varied depending on the lead taken by the participants. Many times the initial questions were followed by additional probes to clarify or explore the experiences shared by participants. The style of interviewing was facilitative allowing the participants to share whatever they wanted while being respectful of the emotional and deeply personal nature of the experiences being shared by them. For example here is an excerpt from the interview with Mr. and Mrs. B, immigrant parents:

Mrs. B: In October we went for the puja there I met girls and all my friends so I talked to them and then I felt better you know that at least I have my people here around.

Investigator: so you sort of expanded your community.

Mrs. B: Yeah.

Investigator: Those who were going through the same experience.

Mrs. B: Right and they were also new they just came so you know I had very good friends there.

Investigator: So initially I guess it was a bit challenging.

Mrs. B: Yeah exactly and I used to dream you know that I'm running in the field or something because its so closed over here and in India our houses all windows open and big verandas and everything we had there but here everything you know closed even if the windows are not closed they have nets there (laughs) so I used to feel that I am just stuck somewhere so that's the experience I had.

I was also conscious of the fact that I am not a neutral or objective participant in the interview process. Being an Asian Indian student born in India and having recently come to Canada in 2007, might have influenced the participants and the interview process to some extent. Yet, at the same time I felt that I was able to utilise my knowledge and personal experience of having lived in both the Eastern and the Western part of the world to enhance my sensitivity to the experiences of these families. My conversations with second generation Asian and non-Asian Canada born friends and family members has

also helped me get familiar with the many challenges and strengths of traversing different cultural worlds. Hence, my style of interviewing was not interrogative but flexible in order to encourage ideas to emerge freely during the interview. I also withheld any comments during the interview process except to paraphrase or probe what was being shared. For example an excerpt from another interview with Mr and Mrs. A, immigrant parents:

Mrs. A: I would ask and whatever homework they would be doing so we would be talking about all those things and then I will take them to swimming or libraries or karate or whatever is it and then by the time I will put them to bed by probably...that was the time they will go bed and they will be in their room and then I will start my studying and all kind of things so it was overworked, overwhelmed and over challenged.

Investigator: What went through your head what sort of?

Mrs. A: I couldn't think much (laugh) at that time it was always on the go.

Investigator: But what sort of pushed you what drove you like what was?

Mrs. A: Like raising up kids and bringing you know making them a better individuals and what I am struggling through now both of us we didn't want them to struggle in their first life what we went through you know we had to struggle.

Mr. A: For me what was going through my mind for me also to settle I had to this and when I do this they are going to school they will slowly graduate one day.

After the interview, the participants were invited to comment on their experience of the interview and if they had any suggestions or queries. Participants indicated that they enjoyed the interview and found the open-ended format of the interview comfortable and helpful.

*Data organization.* The data in the form of audio recordings and transcripts were coded using a number system. Each set of parents and child from the same family were identified with a number and an alphabet. All parent interviews and transcripts were

identified with the letter *a* and all children interviews were identified with the letter *b*. For example, the parents and the child from one family were marked as 1 (a) and 1 (b) respectively. All files were closely protected, that is, saved within a password protected folder on the computer that also included the identifying information of the participants assigned to a numbering system. The printed transcripts did not have any self-identifying information and were identified with the help of the same numbering system. In order to further protect the identity of the participants all the parents and children in this thesis are identified with a letter. The letters *A* till *N* have been randomly assigned to the participants.

### *Data Coding*

Thematic Analysis is a widely used method within qualitative analysis. The method entails certain core skills which are common to many other types of approaches. One of the key features of thematic analysis is its flexibility and its independence from any theory and epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The method involves a process of identifying, analysing and seeking patterns or themes within the data. The data collected in this study was analysed using the guidelines suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

*Phase 1: Getting familiar with the data.* The most essential aspect of conducting a thematic analysis is a prolonged period of immersion within the data. After all the interviews had been conducted they were transcribed into a written form in order to begin the analysis. The process of transcription, even though time-consuming and trying at times, led to an easy familiarization with the interviews. It was kept in mind that the transcripts were a verbatim account of the interview. Portions of the interview which were not audible were marked by an ellipsis symbol (...). The transcripts were then

checked against the original audio recordings for any errors or omissions. The repetitive close reading of the transcripts helped facilitate a meaningful understanding of the different issues explored within each of the interviews.

*Phase 2: Generating initial codes.* The next stage of the analysis involved reading and familiarising oneself with the written transcripts and generating an initial set of ideas about the salient issues in the text. This phase involved application of codes to the textual data to organise it into meaningful and manageable chunks. All the transcripts belonging to a family were read together, i.e., once the parents' transcript (one transcript for both parents) had been read the child's transcript was read. After this the transcripts were read again but this time all the transcripts of the parents were read together followed by the transcripts of the children. This flexibility in the reading allowed easy recognition of the recurring ideas across transcripts. After a thorough understanding and familiarisation of the text had been developed, the process of coding was initiated.

Codes referred to any meaningful semantic feature of the data that were salient to the research and appeared to re-occur across the transcripts. In addition, it was made sure that the codes were not redundant or interchangeable i.e. no two data extracts could be coded the same way. The entire data was given full and equal attention. After an initial set of codes had been developed the printed transcripts were coded manually by writing on the texts and using highlighters to identify the segment of data extract that matched the code. If any additional codes emerged during this process they were added on to the original list. The coding for the parents' transcripts was done separately from the coding of the children's transcript. Along with the researcher, another graduate student volunteered to code 8 of the 14 transcripts. Both the researcher and the peer-reviewer

coded the transcripts separately. After they had finished coding a meeting was set up where the codes were discussed and suggestions incorporated. For example, the code City vs. Rural was a result of one such discussion. The idea was to have a reliability check and an unbiased perspective on the process of coding. The peer-reviewer was well trained in thematic analysis and was not involved in the development of the research project. Although no inter-rater reliability index was calculated the peer reviewer was involved in all the stages of the analysis starting from coding to the generation of final themes. Discussions with her were very helpful in looking at the various patterns of meaning embedded within the data. It was ensured that the text was coded for as many relevant codes as seemed important, keeping in mind the context of the data. See Figure 1 for examples of codes applied to short segments of data.

Figure 1. Data extracts with codes

Data extract	Coded for
I found that the less pressure that is definitely helpful because in India I saw the amount of pressure that children go through it is really horrendous for them	Comparing (India)
I need to make sure who they are hanging around with because that was very important...you know I need to make sure that I knew all their friends both for both of them	Keeping eye on friends
Like go to my in-laws or his mother and my brother sister in-law and how important it is you know to show respect to the elder	Respect
But I did not find any trouble to get the job because I was qualified from Germany and I have the papers there was a lot of German companies as soon as they saw they hire me I don't have any problems	Finding job easy

*Phase 3: Searching for themes.* Once all the data had been coded, a long list of codes were identified across the data set. This phase of analysis consisted of sorting the different codes into potential themes. There were 81 set of codes generated for the parents and 85 codes for children. While the codes constitute the basic semantic units of analysis, the themes are much broader in focus and require a more interpretative analysis. All the codes were written on a separate piece of paper. After this all the codes were sorted into potential themes. Writing the codes on a separate piece of paper was visually helpful in organising the different theme piles. This is also the stage when one begins to think about the relationship between the codes, between the themes and the different levels of themes. Themes were grouped together and then checked for emerging patterns for variability and consistency. The interpretation of the themes was conducted by a process of reading and re-reading of the transcripts as well as reference to relevant literature and consultation with the peer reviewer. See Figure 2 for example of the codes that were sorted into two themes.

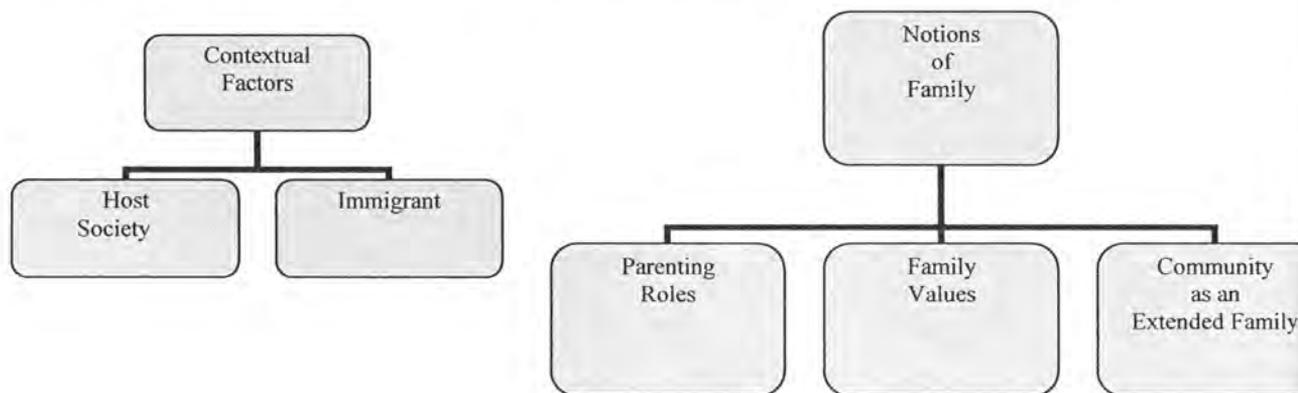
Figure 2. Themes and their codes

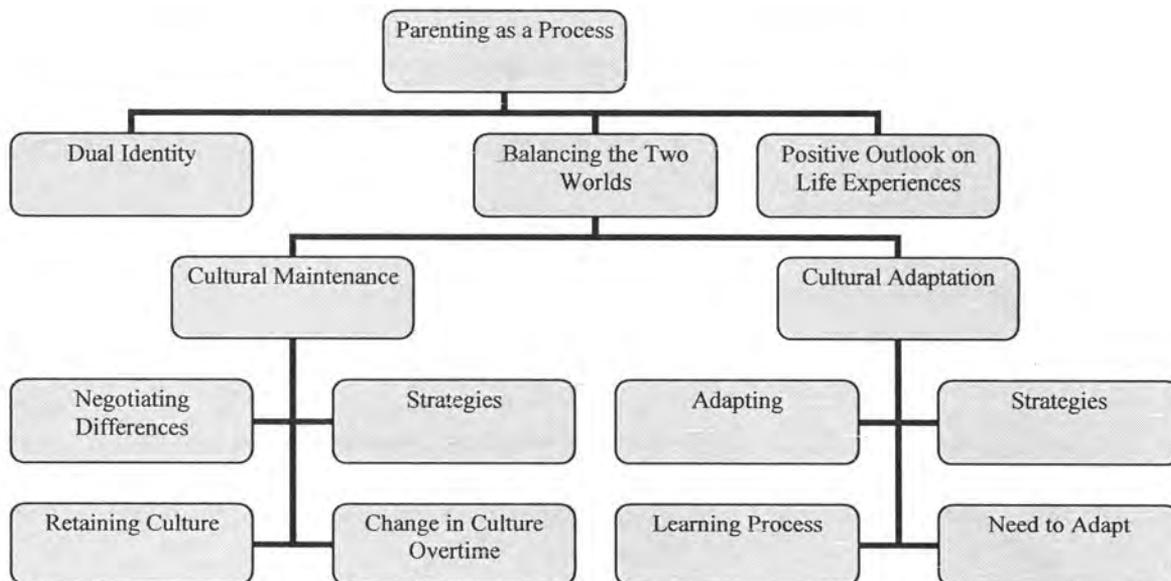
Themes	
Factors Pertaining to Immigrant	Family Values
Prior acculturation 1	Trust 38
Feeling lonely (Missing family, Lack of connections) 11	Respect for elders 42
No support/ help parenting 12	Family central to character building 46 a
Adjusting to a different context- Different food, Different climate, systems 13	Family and identity 46 b
Finding job was challenging 14	Extended family important 46 c
Adjusting to arranged marriage (wife) upon coming 15	Emphasis on education 49
Finding job was easy 17	Education equates to success 50
Initial fascination upon coming (cars, clean, no honking, roads, traffic rules)	Family support challenges (children) 52
	Family pride 79

20 Admiration for host culture (work ethics, transparency, health care, opportunities) 21 Stories immigrants hear 71	
--	--

*Phase 4: Reviewing and naming the themes.* After the initial set of 16 candidate themes each for parents and children had been developed they were reviewed keeping in mind the dual criteria of internal and external homogeneity (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were closely examined to check whether all the coded data extracted fit the theme and whether the individual themes were representative of the data set as a whole. The themes were then examined separately and in relation to the others. A thematic map was generated to see if they fit the entire data set. The themes were then named and organised into subthemes and the main overarching themes incorporating those subthemes. These different levels of themes were helpful in demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the text. For instance, Contextual factors, Notions of family and Parenting as a process were identified as the main overarching themes that best captured the subthemes and codes within the data (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Thematic map illustrating three main themes and corresponding sub themes





## Results

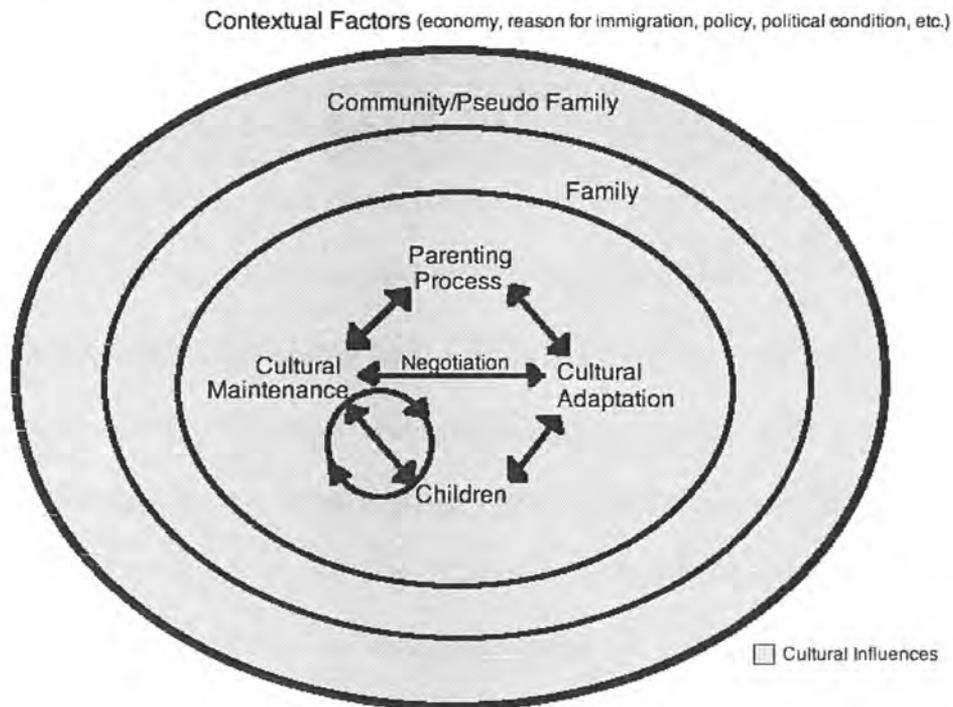
The analysis of the transcripts resulted in 16 first order themes for the parents and the children. These themes were organized within 3 interrelated higher order themes and 8 subthemes. Table 1 lists the themes generated. The codes are listed in Appendix D.

Table 1. Higher Order Themes and Subthemes

Contextual Factors	Host Society
	Immigrant
Notion of Family	Parenting Roles
	Family Values
	Community as an Extended Family
Parenting as a Process	Balancing the two worlds
	Dual identity
	Positive outlook on life experiences

In order to be able to fully understand the experiences of immigrant parents and their second-generation children one needs to look at the context in which they are embedded. This embeddedness of the parenting experiences is illustrated in Figure 4. There is a need to look at each level in the context of the next level.

Fig 4. Balancing of the Family Ecology



### *Contextual factors*

In order to fully understand the experience of immigration at any time it is important to look at the contextual influences during that time period. There were two subthemes which emerged within this category. The first highlighted factors pertaining to the host society. Within this subtheme the first important issue which came up was the immigrant's experience based on whether they first settled within a city or in a rural area. For most of the immigrant parents, settling in a city meant easier access to community

networks with other fellow immigrants, in particular, Bengali Asian Indians and easy accessibility to available cultural resources.

Another important subtheme which came up was acceptance within the host society. Personal experiences of people having preconceived notions and feelings of being different were common for many parents and children. Considering the time-period when these immigrant parents came, the ethnic make-up within Canada was seeing a major shift for the first time. These experiences played an important role, not only in the initial adjustment and adaptation process of these families, but they also have relevance for questions around identity. Mrs. A, an immigrant mother, elaborates:

Mrs. A: I used to dress I used to wear saris and like all Indian women and so I started realizing that probably I have to change and I remember I used to for what I came across at that time that the people they will prejudge you they judge you with the preconceived ideas. Because one of the experiences I used to go to the Toronto General for my check ups and all. So I will wear like during winter times so I will would wear the socks and all the nylon stockings everything I was wearing but when she was trying to she was going to check me up so I took everything off but then she started telling me you know what you have to wear the you know nylon stockings and all kind of things I said ya I was wearing it but I just you know took it off because but you know she was not believing me so it was I felt that you know by looking at you they will judge you and they will say they don't know these things so I have to so everybody so I just digested myself. ....I also I had another time. When I was teaching when I was at a teachers college I went to you know kindergarten classroom I had to go for my practice teaching and all so I was reading a book by Robert Munch I just saw that he is sick anyway the witches picture was there and witch is black and all kind of things and kindergarten child and she was that witch looks like you because you are the same colour (laugh) so you know this kind of things. I mean they are very innocently those remarks were done but you know you immediately you realize that this is what and like in daycare I used to wear like saris and I didn't wear saris but you know we Bengali ladies we wear sindoor and so he the boy little children one day I was taking the circle and they said what happened to your head there is blood in your (laugh) so I thought oh okay so there is another reckoning so you know and I also realized that you know if I have to teach the children become more close to you if they see me at a familiar dress up and all condition and so I started gradually changing to you know pants and all kind of things and.

However, as much as there were experiences of “being judged” there were experiences of being accepted and welcomed. Acculturation thus seemed like an active bidirectional process of adjustment and adaptation not just for the people who immigrated but also for people within the host society.

Another contextual factor which played an important role in the experiences of parents was prior exposure to Western culture. For the fathers, the process of initial adaptation was much easier as many of them immigrated to Canada after having lived in other Western countries. Also, most of them came at a young age as students or young professionals. Since, this was a period of time when Canada was welcoming technically trained people into the country, most fathers did not have any problem finding a job.

For one family, the parents’, in spite of being highly educated with work experience, struggled to get themselves accredited before finally getting a job in their chosen field of teaching. In addition, the experience of initial adjustment involved feelings of loneliness and isolation. For these immigrant parents coming from extended families of strong kinship network Canada seemed alien and aloof. Mr. and Mrs. F immigrant parents:

Mrs.F: Yes I’ll tell you what I missed I missed the fact that we don’t have family that is the main thing that thing they say it needs a village to raise a child there is no one it’s the responsibility of bringing up your children lay completely on you and its scary at times that was the main thing that we missed not having people not having any guidance like I didn’t have guidance when I had them and I had never touched a baby in my life and he was working like 12 hrs and I would look at this baby and think what do I do with that like you know that is the nurse came one day and that’s it and she’s done ..because I had a normal healthy pregnancy and a normal healthy baby so that’s it you’re on your own and that is a very and it’s very lonely we don’t have people in this country.

Mr. F.: Ya people and that social structure like that thing.

Mrs. F.: Ya that is what we missed.

Mr. F: You don't know in mostly who lives next door.

Mrs. F: Ya we got neighbors we've been with them for almost 20 yrs I know them just like just pleasantries other than that we are not friends.

Adjusting to food and the climate were the other initial challenges for these immigrants.

In parallel to the challenges of adjusting were differences which they both cherished and admired. Mrs. D an immigrant mother:

Mrs. D: And you know but then and then what was striking that you know that mixing of the making friends...you know mixing with you know girls and boys but here you see everybody is so that was quite fascinating to see and then another big difference which I noticed when I was working that time that hierarchy is not there in India that you see bosses and but here I see that you know that company's general manager is lunch time he is in his room there is a person from the what you call warehouse warehouse guy you know he is the most blue collared person there he comes to his room and just sits down and chats with him very very eye opening to me to see that what you call that what's the right word for it dignity of labour its amazing to see that so all mixed things good things very you could see and then certain things you know but homesickness was there started feeling.

One interesting thought process which came up during a few interviews was pre-immigration beliefs and how that influences the process of adaptation for new immigrants. Mr. and Mrs. B immigrant parents:

Mr. B: They come with a rosy picture that you know Canada money is all over you know its on lying on the road you'll have to pick it up when they come and find actually that there is no job or anything which they don't know from the other side I think that's the most difficult part that present immigration or immigrant community.

Mrs. B: Many young couple they do have you know.

Mr. B: They had good opportunity.

Mrs. B: Because they were quite rich over there.

Mr. B: Good job.

Mrs. B: They came and can't find a job so some people are going back and some people can't have food even here.

Mr. B: You know they come here and they can't find job these are professional people I'm talking because one thing you will see you will find if you compare Bangladesh Pakistan and India you'll see that the immigrants who are coming from India they are by far highly educated compared to the immigrants who are coming from Pakistan or other parts of Bangladesh and other parts of the world but when they come they come after quitting their well job and all the status and everything come here so much money is involved and expense and all this land here they come with a dream that they you know they will have a good job and they cannot find a job like work as a like factory worker 10 dollars 12 dollars I think this is the biggest problem the modern immigrants are facing honestly I never faced that I was lucky.

The experiences within this theme point to the vital role played by the context of immigration. Of particular importance are issues related to financial stability, easy availability of jobs, the education level of immigrants, reasons for immigration, prior acculturation and pre-immigration beliefs, along with the political and emotional climate surrounding immigration within the host society at the time. It is these contextual factors which shaped the experience of acculturation for the parents in this study. In short, it is important to use an ecological perspective to better understand some of the individual differences and similarities in the process of acculturation.

### *Notions of Family*

The three important subthemes within this category were as follows: Parenting Roles, Family Values, and Community as an Extended Family.

#### *Parenting Roles*

Both parents and children defined the role of parents as guides who have the responsibility of showing the right path to the children. H and M, two sons, describe their parents as follows:

H: They were very involved very sort of...it was a very traditional sort of South-East Asian upbringing. I think it was a very sort of you looked to your parents for guidance they instilled in me my parents at least a very strong sense of duty and

expectations and knowing your limits and sort of follow doing things within boundaries.

M: I believe they play the they play the protector then play the play..I guess guidance they are people who guide you they are ones who have history and the stories to tell you about they are the ones you ultimately fall back on in the end whenever you have a situation in your hand I think you'll see friends..I think kids will see friends come and go but parents are always there once you realize that that's probably a very important point I think parents role in their upbringing is very important.

What was interesting was that the parent's role and importance was almost always contrasted with the secondary role and importance of friends. The experience of parents as involved and completely dedicated to parenting was also an important theme for both the children and parents. For example I a daughter:

I: They definitely held on to their values so parents are supposed to spend all their time raising their kids and looking after their kids and in return the kids are going to look after their parents when the parents get old.

Investigator: So like in some ways almost defining themselves in terms of their roles as parents and not like.

I: Yes they are parents for those twenty years that's all they are there are no date nights for my parents to go on their own or you know there is no pursuing their own hobbies it's your children your entire focus.

During another interview M, a son, talks about his parents:

M:...I look at it and I'm like they had no other life but us and to me that's a little sad and to me I wouldn't want to be that way either I would also have to have a life of my own as well not that I'm not going to live for my kids I would but its all about balance.

Where the mother in these immigrant families took on the role of the primary caregiver especially during the early years of the child's upbringing, the father was the main earning member of the family. Even though the mothers were well educated, there was a trade off between the mother staying at home and taking care of the children while the

father earned a steady income for the family. Education remained a joint focus for both parents with the father taking more of a central role as the children went to higher grades in school.

### *Family Values*

The central place of the family seemed like an important experience for both towards the family. I, a daughter, expresses her feelings as:

I: I am very conscious of what of what's important to them and what they like and I do want to kind of give back for everything they've done for me for I recognize that they have done a lot.

Mrs. D talks about how her daughters and the central role of the family as a system of support for them:

Mrs.D: The family structure helped them you know to you know but ya they know that's what K and P say one thing that they always like you know specially coming from the Indian families one thing that you know all Indian kids they know no matter what they always have family support and that's a great feeling that family is.

Feelings of duty and obligation were linked to children attributing personal success to parents. H, a son, talks about his upbringing and his feelings of obligation towards his parents:

H: I no seeing how my brother and I did we definitely landed on the right side of the road. There is no question that my parents did in raising job..There was opportunity there for us to fall through the cracks so many times so I am thankful for that I think that's a huge driving force for whatever I do.

These feelings of obligation as H further elaborates involve a strong desire of not letting down the parents:

H: Growing up I know for fact that whenever I used to come to the crossroads of doing something that might be sort of inherently wrong I always used to think what would my mom and dad think and I don't know why I was really disappointed I was really afraid of disappointing them. I know that and I don't know where that came from but I do you know what I think it came from they

were very proud people they were very big on the family name so I think it was I think it was always whenever I would do something they were like how does this look on our family and that sort of carried through and that would always play back whenever I was in a situation and I would always think god forbid do something to defame the family name and I think that sort of guided me.

Respect for elders was another important value for parents. Mr. and Mrs. B, immigrant parents, talk about instilling this value in their daughter:

Mr. B: ...elder brother my sister they all came from India from England all over now that when they come that you will have to like we when we do pronam we touch the feet and do pronam all these now they have learned yes still I would say sometimes I remind them that I don't forget to pronam so and so but we don't force and I think we have as I said we have instituted a certain some values of our culture culture means food our way of talking our.

Mrs. B: The respect for the elders.

Mr. B: We have learned we have tried to give them.

Mrs. F, an immigrant mother, cites a hierarchical natal cultural system as the reason for this emphasis on respect as an important value for children:

Mrs. F: One thing that was very very important is the question of respect I think there are certain things that our culture teaches us that yes although we are equal in certain degrees we are not and if you are older there are certain things you just don't say or you just don't do so I love that thing about you know respect somebody older than you even if he is completely wrong sometimes its absolutely taboo to to be disrespectful so I think the respect area I think.

Closely linked to the importance of family values emphasizing a close connection between family members was a feeling of a familial identity being an important part of the self-identity. Mr. C, an immigrant father, talks about the relevance of the early years in instilling this familial identity tied to values and background:

Mr. C: Children are guests in the house after certain age they get up and leave so you have them in the house for X no years you know somewhere between 18 and 25 yrs after that they will move away and within that time you have you know they really don't understand you tell about their what to feed for 4 yrs of age from that time till about the time they are 12 yrs of age that's the time when you have about 8-10 period to give them a sense of their values their background the

identity whatever and once that time is passed then they become independent they start thinking on their own. If you haven't done it by that time you are done so the opportunity for the parents is in that limited window.

Mrs. A, an immigrant mother, talks about how the actions of children are a reflection on her as a parent:

Mrs. A: No here the thing is this is a problem it's very difficult situation our kids you know they face and when they are growing up because it's our culture that you know specially with I have boys so my friends say well you don't have to worry because they are boys I said no because if boys do something wrong the blame will come on to them and it will come on to me right and so I have to talk to them too you know.

In one of the interviews Mrs. E, another immigrant mother, feels nostalgic about how she could not provide the joint family environment for her child:

Mrs. E: I couldn't give him the family here so that's the way Indian kids they know aunt, aunty, grandparents he didn't get anybody and that's...not good if you don't have extended family here its you are not full whole person you have to know how to communicate with grand..he saw only us and when I used to go to India that is only for two months and that's not enough for I mean here we have friends but they are not they are sort of you know.

The idea of an individual being an extension of the family is pointed out by Mr. B, an immigrant father, as he takes pride in the fact that there were 38 people who came from India to attend his daughters wedding in Canada:

Mr. B: Like all my friends who are very much surprised to see so many of my relatives attending my daughters wedding and few of them could not come because they had some problem or they are sick otherwise I would have had more now really really I enjoyed and I think they enjoyed I wanted that way because I wanted to teach them that wedding in on our side its wedding is not just between the boy and the girl it is like 2 families getting married and that's what I wanted to teach them and you know god was good to me and I am very close I mean as I said I always try to help my family members always and even today if somebody wants my help I will always help that is my nature and I always wanted to teach them I hope they learned you know I try I always tell them don't be selfish you know try to share have a good relation.

*Community as an Extended Family*

The notion of family as a theme is comprised of people beyond the immediate nuclear family of parents and children. Family members that lived across the world, people they met every few years on those indispensable trips to India were still seen as close. Trips to India and frequent communication played an important role in maintaining as well showing kids the value of these family connections. Mr. and Mrs. D. talk about their children learning that sense of family:

Mrs. D: ...the sense of family in the sense like they saw my brothers are you know and the brothers kids you know they are living together and sharing things and so on that joint family.

Mrs. G talks in one of the interviews when asked about what she missed about home begins to reminisce about her upbringing in a joint family:

Mrs. G.: The joint family system because I am I was brought up in joint family and our family still...is still together so even though they don't eat together they live in the same way the business is still the same so together so that's what they have unity you know like at least everybody together and so I miss that and I wish my kids were but they have little bit of idea every time they go there they really enjoy it and they want to go back again.

After coming to Canada it is within a close network of other fellow immigrant Asian Indians that these immigrants sought that close connection and support of a joint family. It is interesting to note that the place of an extended family was so vital that complete strangers with little in common except the same cultural heritage came together to establish pseudo kinship networks in an effort to maintain that connection. J. a daughter describes her family as comprised of these very family friends:

J:...when I was growing up we spent so much time with some of my family friends so far away from and so far away from my from my own family a lot of time my our family friends that we grew up with I think of them as family because like like they cause like my parent's friends and stuff like we spent so much time with them when we were growing up I think of them as family pretty much and I'm sure they think of me as sort of a pseudo kid and you know A uncle L mashi once A uncle introduced me as his other daughter and then the guy got

very confused he's like you have three daughters no he has two daughters and then I'm just this thing like on the so ya and I think of them as my parents anything happens to me I also phone them up and let them know what's going on.

The community networks for these immigrant parents and children were not just pseudo family systems of support and coping, but also a cultural grounding of socializing children. I, a daughter talks about these regular social and cultural interactions within the community:

I: I was around other Bengali's at least two to three times a week doing cultural things I did all the dance dramas and you know the weekly rehearsals every puja we were always around Bengalis all their friends are Bengalis too so all of the parties were eating Indian food sitting in Indian house so what that is it also became part of my culture and what I am used to seeing.

L, a son, talks about these networks as a cultural community:

L: I did have a very good strong cultural family like I grew up with 4-5 people that they you know they are like family and have gone through the same experiences with me.

Mrs. E talks about the importance of these community interactions for instilling certain cultural values in children

Mrs. E: I used to go to the community things so here there he learnt about Indian culture and and specially if parents do those kind of things follow they automatically they know the value and what they have to do.....I took him to the Indian community so he saw what is going on and his friend circle he picked friends from there those who are born at the same time they used to go here and there maybe not everyday.... but that's the way he got the Indian influence in his character you know.

For the children these community networks also provided interactions with other children who were growing through similar experiences. A shared space where they could talk freely about their experiences without feeling alienated. I, a daughter, best describes this almost therapeutic nature of these social networks for both children and parents:

I: They were so heavily involved in the Indian community so when I was at these parties you know the kids all went to one room and the parents all sat in the

mothers all sat in one room and the fathers all sat in another room but where the kids were I mean they were all going through the same thing as me so we could talk about it and could laugh...it was almost that you know your support group there and you didn't necessarily feel completely alone and you know I am the only one who has to do this and all my friends are different because these group of friends were the same as you were.

This pseudo family not only provided an emotional support, but also had practical benefits. Mr. C, an immigrant father, gives an example of the advantage of this reciprocal system of care:

Mr.C: When our daughter was born that time I would be taking her to the hospital and so on and the arrangement I had and the way it worked out was I called one of my Indian friends he came and picked up my son and he went out and stayed with for couple of days while I went back and forth to the hospital so we had a support system like that and of course when they needed something I would help them also but in our circle of friends that was a kind of mutual support that we would give to each other that worked out very nicely so we didn't really have to depend on anybody outside.

#### *Parenting as a process*

Parenting for immigrant parents was a process of continuous learning. J, a daughter, talks about this process as involving a shift in a cultural framework for the parents:

J: I think when they come here it's a bit of a paradigm shift first of all being a parent is pretty hard cause you are trying to figure out how to deal with this..whatever and so but here is a little kid and what's the best thing to do and they only have their own experiences to deal with but it's our context because you are not in the same environment.

H, a son, acknowledges a parallel process of learning and adapting to cultural differences for both his parents and himself:

H: I think my parents were growing up just so much as I was growing up regard to how to handle a kid who's mixed up with different cultures...they were learning they were learning to accept they were learning to see that the things that they would fear were not nothing to worry about...I think their sense of of trying to put a kid together trying to be successful was changing as I got older.

This learning often resulted in a change in the parenting style from the older to other younger children within the family. For example, the same rules and regulations and concerns which dictated parenting for the first born child were relaxed for the younger one. An interesting aspect of acculturation brought out by J, a daughter, is the idea of a cultural time warp for immigrants, where contrary to the fluid and dynamic nature of culture in real life, our mental representation can often be much more static:

J: The India my parents left behind its changed a lot so its funny they were sort of like in a time warp it's like a in a time capsule...even though the country has evolved they don't.

An important adaptation for the parents was finding a way to bridge some of cultural differences between their upbringing as children and their parenting in a new cultural context. Common to the experiences of both parents and children was also recognition of the challenges faced by the other. Mrs. B. a mother remembers her daughter trying to teach her friends how to pronounce her Indian name:

Mrs. B: Like I my daughter name is I K we call her K but her name is I so when she was young around 5-6 years her friend and ask her name and that was very difficult name what the western people to pick so she used to explain it you know S because there was a show S you know S so it's I so that way she explained them her name is I.

This process of parenting is best described as a balancing act by H, a son:

H: Now when you are adapting new culture I think there is definitely a strain on the parents and that's this comes down to the parents. Some parents are completely blind to the no our way is the only way and other parents are embracive of the new culture. Completely embracive of the new culture and then there is the middle ground who try to find how do we incorporate these new values these new principles into our our cultural belief system and I think at the end of the day it is how how can I think the best way to do it. I think that's how my parents did it. How do we incorporate the best of both worlds for the benefit of our children but I think it is a very very difficult balancing act. I don't think its easy and I don't think there is a guide book for you just do it by feeling and each parents and each individual probably has their own sort of risk tolerance how much they want to push it and I think in that goes back to what I was saying

earlier it's a balance that I hope I can find too. Because I want to maintain that culture but I also want to make sure that they embrace what it is to be Canadian.

### *Balancing the two worlds*

The balancing process for the families involved a process of negotiating cultural differences and adapting on one hand, and trying to maintain the natal cultural heritage on the other.

*Parents' experiences.* One important cultural difference for parents was the relative freedom for children in the western world compared to their own traditional upbringing. This freedom ranged from dating, drinking, interacting with friends, late nights, working while in school and so on. Mrs. B. talks about her apprehensions regarding her daughter staying out late for parties and how she eventually negotiated a process of adaptation for herself:

Mrs. B: .like when my daughter was growing up she was say 17 18 she wanted to go parties right they all all of them go and I used to in the beginning I used to say no when it is 12 o'clock that is to late why don't you go early have party and come home just like we used to do in India then she said mom if I come at 12 o'clock that's when the party starts if I come then they will laugh at me then I said oh yeah that is one of the point you have so gradually I have to leave her you know but from my inside I had to struggle for that because I'm not used to even when its getting dark before that we used to be home my parents wont allow me to be out even now if I want to go out in the evening take the car somewhere I feel very uneasy uncomfortable because that is the way I have been brought up right so those things even my daughter son goes he return at 3 o'clock in the morning at the beginning I couldn't sleep but now I know this is the way it is so you have to accept that and let them do what they have to do.

The process of negotiation was also not an easy process with an eventual resolution. Mrs. F, a mother, talks about how adaptation for her remains a continuous process of negotiating different value-systems:

F: Its it's like for instance I'll tell you something like this is maybe personal but things like a women's virginity to me it is a big thing alright because I come from

India and.. that's an essence of me and to be that is the be all and ..all of all morality which is actually not which I understand as a human being that it is not but I cant get over it so like like the way I put it to my children is the ..as this.. a sexual act is something that is an adult act and when you are an adult and you are responsible for yourselves is that is a time it's a responsibility a sexual act is a responsibility because it its main purpose is to have children and children are responsibility so for me it is okay for you to have sex but that should be done when you are an adult so we came to a compromise for that I couldn't come to a compromise to say that you have to be married which would have been my ideal thing before before you have it at least I could come to that and I am quite happy with that at least I know that you know and they maintained that they were very agreeable to that and I said that like you know like things like an adult so they kind of understood that and even now I am quite unhappy about the fact like I am not quiet there with it I can never be there with it and they understand that and I just said I'm not judging you for it but I can't change... I cannot they are adults and they have their own lives and who am I to tell them that it is wrong because its not wrong and I know its not wrong I know my logical mind tells me its not wrong but my moral or whatever mind my biases you can say its terribly wrong so its wrong for me its right for them so its okay.

For Mr. and Mrs. G, immigrant parents, the process of learning involved compromising and trying to see the perspective of the children:

Mr. G: Lot of adjustments its very important in having I know like I compare them with my own growing up..India growing up is completely different you know ya we picked good things of course that's what we are giving them but it still is different I think...since we are here so long we..you know mentality like everything has been changed we are open...I think also you have to you have to always see that everything has a has other way of looking at doing things and sometimes you know if it a they are not doing something wrong but I think that could be different way so..just hold on different way we thought respected their opinions the way they are doing things and if we didn't like it you know we accepted.

The process of cultural adaptation involved many changes for parents from learning to cook different kinds of food, wearing western clothes, encouraging children to participate in non-traditional activities like skating and piano, celebrating Christmas, letting children mix with friends regardless of ethnicity, having sleepovers and so on. One important area

of mutual negotiation and adaptation for both children and parents was education, with the education of the child almost being a joint effort and focus of the entire family.

An interesting idea of trade-off between freedom and education is shared by I, a daughter. She shares how her freedom to date was based on recognizing the priority her parents placed on her education:

I: So it was knowing what they were okay what they were not okay with. I couldn't come home with bad marks I knew that so I'd always make sure to have good marks. When I started dating my husband there was like my marks were so good so this isn't impacting me so this is what I want to do.

Mr. B, an immigrant father, again emphasizing the importance of education for his children states:

Mr. B: We have them enough freedom to do whatever they want but on one condition I always want and even today I say that you must study...I made it clear to them that this is one thing you cannot ignore because this is the easiest way even today I say this is the easiest way to earn have decent living in any part of this world studying having some professional degrees.

This educational emphasis often being to the point of perfection. As shared by K, a daughter, about how her father would react to her grades:

K: He was the whole oh you got 95% where is the other 5%..so there was not a lot of reward for doing well like what we would like you know....but I think I don't know I am going to be probably like that that I'm not going to reward you for being okay if you do really well then I will make it a point of saying it like my dad said he was proud of me when I finished engineering I think that was the first time pretty much the only time which is fine I mean that's a big deal..

Along with adapting themselves to the new culture parents also actively worked to maintain links with their cultural heritage while socializing children. Some of the ways in which this was done was by making children learn culture through singing, dancing, engaging children in cultural plays, reading books, cooking traditional food in the house and so on.

One interesting manner in which the parents tried to familiarize their children with the natal culture and model values was by telling them stories about their native place and their own upbringing. The role of the community networks was also important in maintaining many of these cultural practices. N a daughter:

N: Babysitter were all the family members within the community and so we'd always be like in that Bengali community..you know and also there was a rule that we always had to speak bangla at home we didn't speak bangla they wouldn't want to talk to us...we'd always family functions we'd always be there so it was fun and my mom did little things like when she'd make things like Indian food she'd try to bring my sister and me into it and she'd teach us and she'd do it in a fun way that we wouldn't be bored ..in the cooking classes she'd teach us she taught us lot of things her mom taught her and she did in India.

Religious festivals and traditional rituals played an important role within the family and community. As shared Mrs. E an immigrant mother:

Mrs. E: I do the pujo you know that he knows that ma does the pujo everyday morning and there is my there is a room specially for you are not supposed to go there with shoes and specially saraswati pujo you know that you have to go temple and do the arti and do the pujo things and you are not supposed to eat before offering the particular day not everyday those kind of things and that case community is very important and I find it out you know that if you don't have good friends kind of teach.

In addition, trips to India were also used by parents to help kids understand their natal heritage. Mr. and Mrs. A immigrant parents recall their trips to India with their children:

Mr. A: Every three four years we have taken them to India...like go to my in-laws or his or my mother and my brother and sister in law and how important it is you know to show respect to the elder those are there..for them going to India for a visit every two three years they didn't loose contact with their our way of thinking how we are expecting them to grow up we didn't have to tell them separately that this is they could see when they used to we used to go.

*Children's experiences.* The challenge for the children growing up within immigrant families was negotiating the cultural differences between parental expectations

and the mainstream society. Comparing his own experiences to that of his friend H, a son, talks about this difference within his family:

H: But there was a clear distinction that I wouldn't you know its patriarchal for the way we do things and your mom and dad are at a certain level and we are at a certain level certain expectations even now I mean its expected that the son or daughter will take care of their mother or father. That expectation doesn't exist for my other friend he is independent his parents are independent you know they make appointments to see each other. My mother complains if I don't see her every two days you know but my other friend he mother will call him a week in advance and say two weeks from now we would like to see you for dinner but if I go to see my parents you know god forbid..

Further elaborating on this ongoing process of negotiating parental expectations and personal goals H shares how moving back to Toronto to be back with his parents meant resisting the limitless opportunities of freedom on one hand and fulfilling his duty towards his parents on the other. The feelings of obligation laced with both relief and doubt at coming back. What is interesting to note is the negotiation and adaptation between the parental expectation of living with the parents and desire for personal freedom:

H: I mean the sky was the limit we could go anywhere but there was this strong draw to come back to family and that draw was partly due to the expectations that I felt my parents had one of their sons to come back and take care of them and not only the expectations I felt that I owed them because I know the sacrifices they made to come to this country and I felt that if I did not I had to repay that and I knew that they needed me which was frustrating I found very frustrating because I saw my other friends they don't have their parents didn't need them and they never were they were made to feel guilty about living away but so it was a constant battle for me because I know part of me was that I don't want to feel bad for coming back because I would want to give back to my parents and but at the same time I knew it was sense of duty that I had to do it and so now when you ask me I think its because its hard to tell cause I just moved back right now I feel have I given up a really good opportunity by not staying in the states I don't know. So am that's where I am right now in my life but I don't regret coming back I mean coming back you are home you are with your mom and dad and you are there to take of them they are getting old now. You want to be around to make sure that nothing happens and you are there for them and you also want to make sure you keep your distance. I know when we were moving back they automatically

assumed we were going to live with them and I made sure that was not an issue I didn't I made sure rent this condo even before we left...I made sure we were at least in a physical different areas.

I, an adult daughter, talks about her experiences of difference in parental restrictions around dating. What is interesting is how comparing experiences with those of other children whose parents were much more restrictive served as an important coping strategy for many children:

I: So the schooling was definitely the most major one then there was just in terms of dating and stuff it wasn't very acceptable I wasn't expected to have an arranged marriage or anything like that but there is a time and place for everything and when you are young and in school that should be your focus not boys or anything like that even when a boy called me say when I was fourteen years old my dad would pick up the phone he'd call me and he'd be like it's a boy okay so I'd pick up the phone and I'd start talking and he would just stand there in the room watching me so little things like that.

Investigator: Did you resent that like that.

I: I did that probably I found it annoying I didn't think it was a big deal and specially when I saw with most people they wanted a boyfriend it was just dependent on what age you were you know in grade six to have a boyfriend meant you called him your boyfriend in school you didn't see him outside of school. So I didn't think it would have been such a big deal. But again I mean my parents were okay. I had a friend who at the temple her parents told her not to talk to any of the boys there so if a boy came over while we were sitting she was supposed to get up and leave which I mean that's a little ridiculous when you're sitting in a Bengali community with your it was our parent's friends children that were there. So my parents were never extreme in that way.

This process of comparison also involved looking at the limited opportunities and competition in India, the natal country of the parents, and feeling fortunate that parents had moved to Canada. Trips to India were helpful in providing children with that perspective. K a daughter talks about her trips to India and how they made her more appreciative of her parents and the freedom and opportunities she had in Canada:

K: All that made me was very glad that I as I felt every single time that my parents chose to leave or that they had the opportunity to leave and they left and

they never went back and that I never had to deal with that or I never had to be the one that left it was just very easy for me to do anything that I wanted to do I never had to fight or struggle or maybe I appreciate what I have more because I see what I...I see the difference.

Where there was adaptation on one hand there was also a parallel process of cultural maintenance. The cultural environment constituted of going to singing, dance and music lessons, participating in plays, learning of the Bengali language, religious festivals and rituals, frequent trips to India and so on. N a daughter:

N: It was Bengali school every Sunday went to Bengali school every Sunday we would from a very young age we started the Indian classical music I started this Bengali music at first and then I went to Indian classical music..and it was very much like in the Bengali school itself..I learnt how to read and write within the school they had programs just like any normal school they had drama class they had poetry competition they had..competition so my parents would always push me to because I'm a really good actress I love theatre and the stage I'd always get the lead roles in all the Bengali plays and I'd always and my sister would always win the poetry contest and I'd always win the lead in the play so that's kind of how we that's how we maintained that..

H, a son, talks about the important role religious festivals played in his upbringing. He admits to the filtering down of these influences yet at the same time expresses concerns about being able to pass it on to the next generation:

H: .we would always go to like durga puja and like that's a huge festival for us and specially going to our temple here we were pretty much as a kid from what I remember we would go to every major...and I think that has defiantly made an impact...I remember whenever we would go on any sort of any major we would also go down to Pittsburg too there is a huge temple there we would go there we would go there whenever there would be a good event. When my brother went off to university when I went off to university when we got married we would do stuff like that and that has in a an interesting way has filtered down me too. I understand the meaning behind it but probably doesn't have as much meaning to me as to them but I still whenever I go wherever I go we still have our collection of our little murtis our little gods and stuff like that I put up and probably doesn't have much meaning to me but I still do it. We have our god's portrait up in our bedroom. We had it in Boston, I had it when I went to University I felt whenever they go take arti or they do they kept flowers and stuff my mom always sure she gives me some I don't I have thrown a single one I think I have them all but so that its has filtered down to me but will it filter down further form me I don't

know because I do it as a reflex but when I have to pass it down or when I have to do it on my own I don't know will I do it. But I don't know but that definitely proves it sort of infiltrated the way I do things.

### *Dual Identity*

The question of identity while living in two cultural worlds was an important issue. I, a daughter, describes this as a juggling of two cultures.

I: I was saying that kids that did have that struggle and tried to make their parents happy and do what would do what would please them it was almost that we were living a double life you know you'd come home and you would know how to act and what to say what to do and then you'd go to school and you'd have to switch into being another person so that you could fit in so that you can make the same jokes and laugh and talk with everybody else so it was almost like learning how to juggle these two cultures made you two different people at different times depending on where you were at that time.

However as much as there was a struggle in learning the skill of "juggling" this flexibility was noted as strength:

I: So I think I'm very good at adapting to people because of that even when I went to Boston I find people I guess America in general are very much more it means the whole melting pot concept as opposed to being a mosaic so there I find they either really struggle to hold on to culture to the point that they don't really know the western world they speak their language they only eat their food they only interact with their own people and they don't know anything or they've gone the opposite way they might be brown but they're completely white they don't know anything brown whereas in Canada in Toronto specifically you find lot more people that have that balance because it's so widely accepted here everyone has that balance everyone's got immigrant parents so we know the cultural aspect but we also understand the western world we go out to eat all sorts of food we've all sorts of friends so I've forgotten my point what was I talking about.

Investigator: umm like sort of juggling identities.

I: So when I moved to Boston I found that I could be friends with both groups you know I could be friends with the people that really stuck to their own culture because I understood what culture they were talking about and where they got the ideals from and I could also talk to the western people because I know how they grew up and I saw parts of that and I parts of that I my growing whereas between those two groups they found it very difficult to understand each other they'd be like oh you did this and you did this whereas I'd been exposed to everything so I think that's the advantage now. I could talk to an immigrant and be able to have a

conversation for two hours and not make them feel foreign like they did but I can also talk to anyone that grew up here you know and be okay.

Connected to the sense of a dual identity was the experience of “being different”. Where the cultural environment within the house and community contributed to these feelings of difference, the social interactions outside these two spaces also left its own impact in many subtle and not so subtle ways. N, a daughter, talks about finding her way through these feelings:

N: ...when you're younger it was always the...you know the white girls with the blond hair and the blue eyes that was popular in our elementary school everyone wanted to be like her you know I was a ...girl and I wanted to be popular too I wanted everyone to be ..I wanted to be up at the top I wanted to be you know same any other girl was and I faced that a lot but then I ended up being me...but I was best friends with that blond haired blue eyed girl so it was just little challenges.

These experiences of being different from the others were salient in many situations. I, a daughter, talks about the traditional way in which her mother would dress up and how it would remind her of this difference. Negotiation for both her parents and herself was a joint process of adaptation:

I: I think dressing was a little difficult like it was fine for me but you know my mother might come to pick me up wearing a saree or like wearing a bindi you know I know when I was younger at times it was little embarrassing and I wished she would just dress like everybody else does or even like the red you know powder in your hair like people at the mall would be like oh excuse me your heads bleeding you've cut yourself. Times like I'd just wish that it was like everybody else... as I got older I just vocalized more that's the way I found to cope with not I'm not hurting them but at the same time not having it be so that I didn't want to hang out with them so if we were going out I would be like you have to wear pants you know that's the only way I'll with you on weekends.

As much as negotiating often resulted in mutual adaptation, there were times when it came at a personal cost of giving up personal interests and desires and making decision mindful of the parental expectations. I, a daughter talks about some parental restrictions:

I: I went to school and I came home I went wherever my parents went. I wasn't even allowed to sleepover at a friend's house until grade seven until I was twelve or so and I had the same friends since kindergarden. Every year I'd ask if I could go spend a night at her house and they didn't let me for eight years. And so as a child I was upset about that sort of thing she's have sleepover parties and all of that. The kids would go and I wasn't allowed.

*Culture as Circular.* An interesting theme in the experiences of the children was a circular process of coming back to cultural roots. Where the initial years of childhood for the children began with a relative lack of awareness of cultural differences, the teen years were accompanied by a desire to distance oneself from one's cultural heritage. It was only after this period of ambivalence that these children as adults experience a need to reinstate a cultural connection with their heritage. The teen years as described by N, a daughter, was a period of turmoil:

N: ...like I growing up I started realizing how different people are outside than the inside of my home so I started acting like I started acting out like how kids would be acting out outside of my home and my parents did not understand that they were like what's going on and im like well they act like that so I kind of act like that and my excuse always was but im a teenager im allowed to im supposed to but you really are really really wasn't supposed to so I found myself like talking back to my parents a lot I think you know the first few years in high school I was... I was crazy I was bad I was rebellious I did all that ....I did everything and I knew within myself this isn't right but I knew I was doing it so I could be accepted.

It was only after living through these challenging times that children often found their sense of confidence and security within these different cultural worlds. For many of these children it involved a desire for continued cultural maintenance later on as adults. N further talks how she would like to model her own parenting based on her own experiences:

N: I would like to bring them up the exact same way my parents did.. brought me up I want them to be because I am not an immigrant but because I grew up with an immigrant family I feel like an immigrant because I went through the same things they went through like I did the same things that they did when they were

here like when I was younger I had a very very high I had a very strong Indian accent ..it's true because I used to speak Bengali so much I had a very strong Indian accent my sister had a very strong Indian accent up until we started elementary school.. it started going away I had it I think I had it up to maybe grade 3...another thing is I will marry an Indian man just because I need my culture to go on im very strong about I very... I would want to speak like my parents always used to say bangla only only speak Bengali that's it..and I think I'll do the same thing because and if I marry someone who is not of Bengali descent and they spoke a different language then so be it but like I'll make sure they knew how to speak the language because that's like number one in everything.

The cultural grounding H, a son, felt provided the secure base of having a sense of connection to his cultural roots:

H: I think when you are younger you are obviously definitely more rebellious and that I think probably when you need the strongest guidance and I think that's when we were grounded at that time because of that constant sort of connection with root go back so often our parents would do and going to Bengali school and all and that's where that connection was sort of solidified and I feel that in cases where this didn't occur in my other Bengali friends I think that connection was maybe not as strong or as reinforced possibly and that's probably why it didn't stay with them...I don't think I rebelled as much throughout my evolution as some of my other friends did.

M, a son, talks about negotiating through his present decision of living with his parents after marriage. On one hand he admits to the challenges of doing it:

M:...I actually like its going to be difficult for me to get married I know that because specially in this country because I actually want to stay in this house I want to stay with my family and all that and most women will not go for that right they'll be like live with my in-laws no its not going to happen right and so its a tough word and I realize that like im putting a lot..but I'm like you know what its really worth..it's really worth the family unit and all that sort of stuff and I have enough trust in them to have that going but I know cards are stacked against me I mean I kind of tried to ..like I mean that's probably one of the main reasons why my last relationship didn't work because I kept telling her look even if we get married right im living here and im like your parents your family home is near here too so we'll just have a bigger infrastructure she wanted no part of it

Yet, on the other he expresses a sense of confidence in his decision to maintain a joint family. The circular process of learning again evident in this negotiation of culture and self-identity:

M: I've come to terms with the certain person that I am like when I was younger I didn't really quite understand and it was kind of like well maybe I'm really Canadian maybe I do have to live on my own and all that but then I came to terms with the fact that no im not as like western Canadian like Anglo-Saxon Canadian type of thing with living on my own I think I gyrate more towards the traditional thing and I've come to terms with that's just who I am and I've kind of learnt that through relationships and through like needs and wants that just kind of came up you don't realize that's how you are until later on in life...I've come to terms with it.

### *Positive Outlook on Life Experiences*

One of themes common to both children and parents as they recalled and looked back at their experiences was a pride in successfully adapting and resolving challenges.

Mrs. A, an immigrant mother, sees her flexibility as her strength:

Mrs. A: My sense of adaptability and my flexibility I really adapted myself so that I don't call myself that I am totally western no but I find something's are really good. You know and those things I have accepted..

Mr. and Mrs. G, immigrant parents, talks about their willingness and openness to adapt while bringing up their children:

Mr. G: This is completely different environment from India you know If I want to say no you have to do this this that's what they do there so I know this is not possible so that's why I had to change and I have to do it according to what the do it here so that's why I changed...I think the way we did I think that's..that's the best but you know like a not impose not to you know force them to do that just you know understand their point of view... why they are saying where they are coming from and then understand and do accordingly make them understand give them the reason..

This positive outlook also incorporated pride in the achievements of children in school, as well-established professionals and their continuing links to many aspect of their parent's cultural heritage whether in terms of being able to speak the Bengali language or

following the cultural rituals. Mr. C, an immigrant father, sees this flexibility in balancing two cultural worlds as a source of strength in his children and himself:

Mr.C: I think they can mingle and mix with people very easily quiet freely you know of all backgrounds...there is no distinction or barriers or anything like that and likewise for us.

In addition, comparison played an important role in this positive attitude. Mr. and Mrs. F compare the limited educational and vocational opportunities in their natal culture to Canada:

Mr. F: One thing we found out which is you know here the competition is not that hard....what my kids achieved here today I cannot imagine that will happen because competition is so tough so here they have better shot at achieving their goal..and you know being immigrant parents and having faced those things ourselves we can kind of tell our children that this is what you have you have the..there are opportunities grab it....which you know somebody who's lived here like for four generations wouldn't even know and would see only the negative of it whereas you can see all the positive you see this is so easy...

The process of comparison at times included reflecting on the experiences of other immigrant parents who faced more challenges in negotiating differences with their children. In addition, there was an element of pride in being able to maintain a cultural environment for the children inspite of a relative scarcity of cultural resources compared to many recent immigrants. The experience of feeling rooted to Canada was also an important experience in this positive reflection:

Mrs. E: This is my also country I am here more than India is my original but I have deep respect for this country whatever this country gave me I have a deep..I am grateful... You see our root has started from here we come as a bachelor get married we built up whatever we have in our community we build up ourself you know what I mean whatever we have have the family.

In summary, parenting is a process of learning for immigrant families. Of particular note in this process is the negotiation between trying to maintain a continuity and connection

with the natal culture on one hand and adapting and changing to the western world on the other.

## Discussion

### *Need for contextualization*

The present research highlighted the importance of understanding individual behavior as embedded within a network of environmental factors. One of the challenges of investigating these influences has been adoption of mainstream Western constructs as a benchmark while doing so (Adair et al, 1995). All societies have a self-structure which reflects the values, goals and the socio-cultural patterns in that environment. However, what is normative as a self-structure in one society can change if one moves from one place to the other (Dhawan et al., 1995; Gore & Cross, 2009). This process of individual development and adaptation in keeping with the larger socio-cultural matrix can be seen in any form of social organization. The problem lies when one begins to define self-structures in isolation of these contextual influences (Roland, 2006). Such has been a long standing problem with the discipline of psychology (Adair et al, 1995; Bhatia, 2002; Marsella, 1998; Misra & Gergen, 1993; Moghaddam, 1987).

Although there has been a shift towards greater recognition of many such factors, there remains a need for more research to further understand the role of culture in development. The indigenization of psychology has been one such important movement in rediscovering the links between cultural frameworks and human nature (Sinha, 1965; Misra & Gergen, 1993). The present study adds to this body of knowledge by explaining some of the many ways in which cultural influences impact the experiences of immigrant parents and play an important role in the development of their children. The subtle and

obvious ways in which we are the product of our environment is best experienced and perhaps first realized when we distance ourselves from it. It is then that the many “taken for granted” beliefs and value systems informing our day to day behavior become salient to us. Although these experiences can be as enriching as they are challenging, they provide us an excellent opportunity to discover cultural patterns which are most central to our identity as people and ways in which socialization goals are connected to context.

### *Parenting and cultural negotiation*

The results of this study center on parenting experiences indigenous to the socio-cultural milieu of Bengali Asian Indian immigrants and their children who were born and brought up in Canada. There is a need to look at parenting as an ongoing process of negotiation for immigrant parents, with culture playing a key role in the development of their children (Inman, 2007). The cultural framework constituting self-structures in such families is often a balancing act of living in two cultural worlds. As described by Mr. and Mrs. B:

Mr. B: One of the challenge I know bringing up children I found is that keeping them focused in the school to learn this culture the normal life in this part of the world at the same time try to implant some of our values to keep that balance because to me...our kids in this part of the world are in a much difficult situation than our kids in India in the sense here they have two values like whenever they are coming home the parents they are trying to implement their values to some extent at the same time you when they go to the school the following day they are being asked oh did you watch Michael Jackson and they say no I was practicing say dance with my mom Indian dance and the kids then say what a nerd you are now I think they are in a much difficult position that way our kids in India there are only one value that is Indian values here the parents especially the first generation like our kids we tried to have part of our values which we like at the same time they will have to...adjust with outer world.

Although parenting in the context of immigration has been a focus for quite a few investigations, the process of cultural negotiation in parenting and the resulting

hybridization of self-structures has not received much attention (Chun & Akutsu, 2003; LaFromBoise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). Where the literature on one hand tries to provide meaning to the experiences of immigrants using cultural frameworks of ethnic natal culture, on the other hand it too often imposes western normative frameworks of the receiving society on such experiences. What is lost in this disjointed understanding is the process of adaptation and learning, which is often inclusive of both (LaFromBoise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). As described by Mr. E an immigrant father:

Mr. E: Parents will have to change their attitude when you left your country and when you are living in other country you'll have to keep your culture keep your good qualities no problem and but what are the other things you need to change yourself that you will have to change.

The concept of parenting as a learning process as highlighted in the results section is proposed as a way to best understand this negotiation that takes place within immigrant families. This process of cultural learning involves trying to keep intact the natal culture on one hand and trying to fit in a new socio-cultural environment on the other. Mrs. F, an immigrant mother, uses the metaphor of flying a kite to best describe this process:

Mrs. F: ...like you know parenting is I think mainly it's like a kite on a string you let go and you pull back and you let go and you pull back and you must know when to let go and when to pull back and it's a game that you play

### *Culture and parenting*

The results and the analysis in this study are based on a sample of seven Bengali Asian Indian families living in Canada. The extent to which experiences within this study are common to other ethnic immigrant groups from India or other countries needs to be explored further. However, many of the observations made in the study are in keeping with other research findings on immigrant parenting experiences. According to Yasui and Dishion (2007), culture plays an important role in development. The influence of culture

can be seen at many levels such as development of an ethnic identity, coping mechanisms, racial and ethnic socialization of children and a bicultural competence in adapting to both mainstream and ethnic cultures.

Yet, the mainstream developmental models fail to incorporate the unique cultural experiences of ethnic minority children. One of the main problems in developmental research as well as in intervention models, as Yasui and Dishion (2007), further elaborate, is the “cultural deviant” (p.137) perspective which uses mainstream Western standards of development and adjustment to locate the experiences of ethnic minority youth. As a result many experiences central to the development of these children are either ignored or perceived as a deficit. The role of culture is especially salient for ethnic minority children who often experience socialization practices, values and belief systems that are much different from children from the mainstream culture.

The process of adjustment then often entails a bridging of two cultural worlds. As suggested by Yasui and Dishion (2007), the present study emphasizes this very need to use culturally rooted conceptualizations of adaptive functioning to understand the process of development and parenting for children. The present research was not designed to describe cultural differences in parenting but rather to understand how Asian Indian immigrants develop a way of working within the cultural worlds they encounter while parenting their children. Nevertheless, the results of the study are consistent with previous findings which argue for a distinctive influence of culture in how parents try to socialize their children (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Inman et al., 2007; Keller et al., 2004; Super & Harkness, 1986; Yasui & Dishion, 2007).

Research highlights that ethnic minority parenting styles cannot be examined using the four subcomponents of Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and indifferent. Chao (1996) coins the term "training" to describe the parenting style that best describes Chinese families. A style which places emphasis on socializing children in culturally approved behaviors requiring parents' devotion, sacrifice and commitment to the child (Chao, 1996). Other similar research findings highlight unique cultural expectations like family obligations, family responsibility, respecting elders and making sacrifice for the family as central to many Asian cultures.

#### *Notions of family*

One of the central themes as highlighted in the results section was notions of family indigenous to the immigrant families in this study. Cultural systems of support are an important part of the socio-centric orientation and child rearing within joint families for Indian children (Sharma, 2003; Kakar, 1989). Where religious ideals of dharma (duty) encourage behaviour guided by social expectations, the focus on Moksha (salvation) encourages the development of an undifferentiated ego (Kakar, 1989). As shared by N a daughter:

N: my dad growing up my like we did little things like I don't know if..do you mean little things like we prayed before we ate like my mom would always she'd make us memorize a mantra and we'd do it before we ate sometimes and my father would always and till this day he still does he quotes things that his father would say to him he'd say to me or he'd quote things that he'd read from the Gita so anytime we were upset or anything and so today he even told me yesterday just do your duty he always used to tell me that do your duty my dad used to tell me that the Gita tells you that just do your duty ..saying things like that it's really made me the person I am today and I really I feel like if I make a mistake its fine just do my duty and that's all I have to do..

The child rearing practices thus complement a psychological disposition to seek guidance of others. This need, Kakar (1989) argues, is reflected in cultural practices of a joint family and the social dependencies in Indian institutions where people actively seek the respect and guidance from authority figures (Sinha & Kanungo, 1997). Markus and Kitayama (2003) talk about the role played by culture in our self-identity.

Where more sociocentric societies encourages the development of an interdependent self-construal in relation to in-group networks, individualistic societies place a greater emphasis on an independent self-construal which values independent acts of self-affirmation. These notions of self not only impact the way we understand and experience, but have important implications for what is considered normative in terms of behavior.

As has been found in many earlier investigations on parenting experiences of Asian Indian immigrants (Basran, 1993; Inman, Howard & Beaumont, 2007; Patel, Power & Bhavnagri, 1996; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981), the immigrant parents in this study tried to maintain a cultural continuity within their family and community while socializing their children. Notions of family obligations, duty, respect for elders and a hierarchical organization of the family structure as suggested in earlier work (Inman, Howard & Beaumont, 2007; Kakar, 1989; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981) came up as vital themes. As shared by Mrs. F:

Mrs. F: There are certain things that our culture teaches us that yes although we are equal in certain degrees we are not and if you are older there are certain things you just don't say or you just don't do so I love that thing about you know respect somebody older than you even if he is completely wrong sometimes its absolutely taboo to be disrespectful so I think the respect area I think is a little bit higher in our society in India and the children have learnt that.

In addition to the role of parents as a guide notions of identity which linked individuals to the collective of a family and community. Culture and family are so central to these immigrants that they actively strove to create pseudo-family networks with other fellow immigrants. As shared by Mrs. E an immigrant mother:

Mrs. E: Community is the most important thing you cannot raise a child without whatever it is if you want same group of people maybe different but still it is I find it that without community.

### *Dual Identity*

Culture played an important role in the daily parent-child interactions within these immigrant families. Parenting cognitions and practices, as research suggests, are a reflection of the dominant culture in any society (Bornstein & Cote, 2005; Kagitcibasi, 1996, 2005). What makes parenting unique in the context of immigration is the dynamics of change in these parental cognitions and practices when parents move from one socio-cultural context to another. Where on one hand one sees a process of cultural maintenance within parenting practices, there is also a parallel process of cultural adaptation to the mainstream society. It's the continuous negotiation between these two processes that is central to the experiences of the participants in this study. The question of identity thus becomes central to this process of negotiation. Although the mainstream development literature talks about self-identity as an important construct in parenting, the role played by culture in shaping that self-identity is not given much acknowledgment (Bornstein & Cote, 2003; Garcia Coll et al, 1996; Phinney, 1989; Yasui & Dishion, 2007).

The role of ethnicity and culture as important developmental processes is exemplified in the experiences of children who grow up within immigrant families. The

construct of a dual identity as suggested in the results best captures these bicultural influences. According to Yasui and Dishion (2007), cultural values, traditions, and rituals provide a foundation for the development of a racial and ethnic identity for children. A positive attitude towards one's race or ethnicity is central to a healthy psychological and relational functioning (Yasui & Dishion, 2007). In addition, cultural preservation and resulting affirmation of ethnic culture and identity also serves as an important source of self-esteem, especially in the face of feelings of cultural distance and discrimination within the host society (Gungor, 2008).

The ability to be able to maintain a bidirectional relationship with two cultures has been found to be an important experience for many ethnic minority individuals. It involves an ability to be able to alternate behaviors and attitudes in relation to the cultural context. As LaFromboise et al., (1993) suggests, there are two cultures within an individual who is then able to alter behavior on the basis of the socio-cultural context. This ability to be able to identify and behaviorally engage in both ethnic and mainstream cultures with the help of a self-identity that is a combination of both cultures has been found to be associated with many positive outcomes for ethnic minority children.

Such individuals are more likely to successfully adapt and adjust to both mainstream and ethnic groups. Research also suggests the positive impact of bicultural competence on psychological well-being and academic achievement (Fuligni, 1997; Lang, Munoz, Bernal, & Sorenson, 1982; Szapocznik, Kurtines & Fernandez, 1980). According to LaFromboise et al (1993), extensive social networks play an important role in bicultural competence. A well established community network not only supports adjustment to mainstream culture it also provides a firm grounding to the culture of

origin. In order to be able to develop a bicultural competence it is first important to experience a close connection and belonging to one's own culture.

The results of this study are supportive of these findings. As defined by a daughter in one of the families, living in two cultural worlds was like living a "double life" yet it is this very "juggling" which facilitated adaption to different people and circumstances. Similar to the children the parents in the study pride themselves on their flexibility. Elaborating on the cultural differences successfully negotiated by her son Mrs. E an immigrant mother states:

Mrs. E: Since their kindergarten when they are going there they are different always different right but they manage they manage and now you see what they are doing... successful it's an amazing thing.

Where on one hand they are proud that the family maintained continuity with the ethnic culture on the other they talk about successfully adapting to mainstream culture in many ways.

*Culture as circular.* An interesting concept of cultural reaffirmation came up for many children. I use the theme "culture as circular" to incorporate these experiences. Although this idea has not received much attention in research, I think it is pivotal to the development of a bicultural competence and ethnic identity for children. Where the earlier years of childhood for the children within this study began with a relative unawareness of culture, the teen years were often marked with a feeling of disconnect and desire to distance oneself from one's natal culture. It was only after these periods of ambivalence that they seek a reaffirmation of their ethnicity. Within this cyclical negotiation emerges a confidence and security in one's dual identity. As shared by M a son:

M: I've come to terms with the certain person that I am like when I was younger I didn't really quite understand and it was kind of like well maybe I'm really Canadian maybe I do have to live on my own and all that but then I came to terms with the fact that no I'm not as like western Canadian like Anglo-Saxon Canadian type of thing with living on my own I think I gyrate more towards the traditional thing and I've come to terms with that's just who I am and I've kind of learnt that through relationships and through like needs and wants that just kind of came up you don't realize that's how you are until later on in life...I've come to terms with it.

The ambivalence and security inherent in the processes of cultural maintenance and adaptation form an integral part of negotiating development in the context of immigration. The families were also open to accommodating different aspects of their identity as Asian Indians, Bengalis, and Canadians. These different aspects of self-identity were fluidly expressed without any feelings of distress or confusion. Mrs. E talks about this duality:

Mrs. E: you have to keep the roots you know rootless society no person will be nobody will respect you if you don't have roots think it that's what I did with my son... and he is very proud of being Indian as well as being Canadian know but he is not ashamed that he is Indian origin no you know that's the thing I think we give him to respect and everything...what India is doing is good as well as Canadian also because first he is a Canadian.

The desire for cultural preservation was also evident among the children who wanted to maintain a cultural continuity and model their own parenting practices based on their own experiences. As shared by H a son:

H: Now when you are adapting new culture I think there is definitely a strain on the parents and that's this comes down to the parents. Some parents are completely blind to the no our way is the only way and other parents are embracive of the new culture. Completely embracive of the new culture and then there is the middle ground who try to find how do we incorporate these new values these new principles into our our cultural belief system and I think at the end of the day it is how can I think the best way to do it. I think that's how my parents did it. How do we incorporate the best of both worlds for the benefit of our children but I think it is a very very difficult balancing act. I don't think its easy and I don't think there is a guide book for you just do it by feeling and each parents and each individual probably has their own sort of risk tolerance how

much they want to push it and I think in that goes back to what I was saying earlier it's a balance that I hope I can find too. Because I want to maintain that culture but I also want to make sure that they embrace what it is to be Canadian.

Notions of cultural continuity and adaptation for parenting in the children although similar in some ways were, also different compared to their parents. As H further elaborates:

H: now I think how am I going to improve it for my children and that can only happen through the mistakes and sort of exploration that I have done and that was sort broadened my horizon because I wanted to make sure whatever I pass down to my children you know you pass down the best advice and my parents passed down the best advice to me through their experiences through their limited I would not say limited but through their frame of reference but now being here I definitely want to sort of expand that frame of reference because my parents didn't have that opportunity and they sort of they are sort of these non traditional skills that your parents can teach you.

#### *Indigenous sources of strength*

This struggle between cultural adaptation and maintenance is inherent in the very nature of the experience of immigration. We are all products of our environment and when that changes a striving for some form of stability is innate to all of us. It is these very dynamics of change that were the focus of this investigation. By closely examining the role played by culture within the family and parenting practices, the study asked whether there are any cultural strengths which facilitate adaptation and adjustment for immigrant parents.

One of the most important roles played by culture is the development of coping skills and self-regulatory strategies. There are culture-specific influences that can promote resilience within the familial context. One can see within this study how individual family members find unique ways to cope with the challenges they face while negotiating cultural differences. For example, comparison to the limited opportunities in

the natal country served as an important source of motivation. Notions of duty and obligation towards the family along with a strong emphasis on education served as protective factors in balancing different cultural expectations. The role of parents as completely dedicated and involved, with parenting being a defining feature for the couple was cited as an important source of familial support by children. Central to the experience of both parents and children was the role of the community.

The ability to be able to form and sustain social networks stood out as an important source of resilience in this study. Pointing to the importance of the community I, a daughter, refers to it as a “a very good strong cultural family” whose presence was almost therapeutic in nature:

I: I mean they were all going through the same thing as me so we could talk about it and could laugh...it was almost that you know your support group there and you didn't necessarily feel completely alone.

It is admirable how immigrants formed these almost therapeutic social networks where both parents and children could not only feel secure in their ethnic identity, but at the same time find support and relief from the challenges they were facing.

As much as there are contextual conditions which create this need to bond and form social networks with other immigrants, there is also a predisposition in socio-centric self-structures which further makes this need for relational networks more salient in certain cultures (Kakar, 1989). It is this predisposition which was a source of great strength for the immigrants in this study. If one looks at the central role played by family and community in the natal cultures of these immigrant parents, a relational orientation played an important role in not only maintaining a strong system of support for children

but also helped family members adapt better to each others need (Greenfield et al., 2003; Rothbaum et al., 2000; Sharma, 2003; Kagitcibasi, 2005).

The parental self-structures and socialization goals reflective of familial notions of duty, obligation, respect and sacrifice for family made both parents and children more embracive and integrating of changes and contradictions. H, a son, talks about his family as a central guiding force:

H: I know for fact that whenever I used to come to the crossroads of doing something that might be sort of inherently wrong I always used to think what would my mom and dad think and I don't know why I was really disappointed I was really afraid of disappointing them. I know that and I don't know where that came from but I do you know what I think it came from they were very proud people they were very big on the family name so I think it was I think it was always whenever I would do something they were like how does this look on our family and that sort of carried through and that would always play back whenever I was in a situation and I would always think god forbid do something to defame the family name and I think that sort of guided me.

The participants within this study often accommodated their family by weighing their input and guidance alongside their own personal opinions while making decisions.

Research suggests that interdependence and family obligation along with an educational emphasis is associated with self-regulation in both socio-emotional and behavioral control (Fulgini, 1997).

This positive influence of parental involvement was reflected in high academic achievement of the children in this study. L, a son, talks about the strong emphasis placed on education by his parents:

L: So I was always choosing so I think I was choosing a path that was safer I knew it was safer and I would face less challenges and in the end I did face a lot less challenges education wise I faced more challenges but from a life perspective going through life I faced lot less...I didn't go through the ups and downs compared to my friends so I felt kind of happy that's after the fact you didn't know at the time right.

One striking feature of the families within this study was the confidence and security they expressed in their ability to change and adapt to the host culture on one hand while retaining their natal culture on the other. Each narrative embodied a positive attitude and pride on having successfully negotiated challenges and cultural differences.

### Conclusion

It is important to recognize the role played by culture in the parenting experiences of immigrant families. Crucial to the socialization of children is the central role played by the family and the community. Such a relational orientation and over-involvement of the parent may seem maladaptive if seen through the western lens which upholds values of independence in development of the child (Gungor, 2008). Research highlights the conflicts which emerge as parents try to hold on to their traditional parenting roles and stresses the need to adapt for immigrants as they socialize their children in a western society. The results in this study are supportive of this process of adaptation as much as they emphasize the crucial role played by practices of cultural maintenance.

The cultural foundation maintained within the family and community whether in terms of language, religion, rituals and so on, helped provide both immigrants and children in this study with a secure base for self-affirmation. It is only from that space of cultural continuity that both children and parents were able to change and adapt. The strategies used by immigrant families in negotiating and balancing the two parallel processes of cultural maintenance and adaptation can be utilized as a resource for clinical interventions with immigrant families. The results of this investigation support that parenting remains a process of learning for immigrant parents. What helps a successful

adaptation is the creative ways in which many families not only balance but adapt themselves.

### *Limitations*

The results of this study are not without limitations. The sample for this study was collected using a reputational sampling method and therefore is not bereft of biases. Although the process of recruiting people for the study was a challenging process, it was felt that considering the strong relational matrix in which the Bengali community operates this method would be the easiest in gaining trust and overcoming any apprehensions towards sharing deeply personal family experiences.

The subgroup of Asian Indians did not represent the full diversity of the Asian Indian community in terms of language, religion, class, educational level and so on. This sample was however felt to be representative of the immigrants who came to Canada during the 1960s and 1970s (Chandrasekhar, 1986; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). Since the experience of parenting was being explored within a cultural framework only one ethnic group from India was chosen. This was again keeping in mind the diverse cultural fabric of India.

The main issue in this study at this stage was not generalizability of findings but exploring the possible cultural differences that are negotiated and the way in which immigrant families create a balance for themselves. Since the interviewer was acquainted with members in the community it is possible that this limited the experiences people were willing to share. At the same time, it was also felt that this made the participants more trusting and willing to share their experiences.

In addition, the researcher's ethnic identity as an Asian-Indian student who grew up in India and recently moved to Canada might have influenced the participant's personal accounts during the interview process. The critical lens whereby the researcher collected and analysed the data may also have been influenced by her identity as an Asian-Indian. However, it is only by being mindful of these subjective realities can a well-informed and meaningful interpretation of experiences be attempted.

#### *Future directions*

Even though cultural conflicts between immigrant parents and their children and the stresses associated with acculturation has often been a central focus of investigations, what has frequently been ignored is the capacity of families to successfully adapt and adjust in the two cultural worlds of ethnic and mainstream society. There are many adaptive characteristics or coping skills which family members possess which act as a protection from potential family disruption in the face of immigration and acculturation. Although research has shown the importance of bicultural competence as leading to positive adjustment, this ability as a family value and a process of parenting has not been given much attention.

An important area of consideration in research remains how families are able to adopt and maintain their natal culture along with adapting and adjusting to the host society. This process is likely to have some similarities and the coping strategies used by these families can be used to gain a better understanding of what makes them resilient to challenges. There remains a need to further examine the experiences of immigrant parents to understand the course of adaptive development for ethnic minority children. In addition, one important method of research which remains to be explored fully in the

context of immigration is the use of longitudinal designs. It will be enriching to look at families over time to understand their adaptive behaviors and coping strategies.

Another important aspect pointed out by this study is that investigation of immigrant experiences needs to take into account the historical context of immigration to better understand differences in family acculturation patterns (Chun & Akutsu, 2003). The next direction in this research would be examine the parenting experiences of the adult children in this investigation and compare them to that of their children. It will be interesting to see how notions of culture get further maintained or hybridized over time.

## Appendix A

### Consent Agreement

#### Negotiating Cultural Transmission: Immigrant Parents and their Children

You are being asked to participate in a research study. I am a graduate student and the research is being conducted as part of a Masters level thesis requirement in the Psychology Program. Before signing this consent form, it is important that you read the following information. You may ask as many questions as necessary to be sure that you understand what the study entails.

#### Investigator:

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Purpose of the Study: The study attempts to better understand how parenting practices of immigrant parents who came to Canada during the 1960s-1970s was informed by their cultural heritage, and what both parents and their now adult children in the age range of 25 to 35 years, found helpful and supportive in their culture and the way it was retained and maintained within the home environment. I plan to interview 6-8 families. In order to get a better understanding of the cultural processes involved the study will limit itself to the Bengali immigrant community from India.

Description of the Study: If you decide to participate in the research, you will be asked to do the following: Sit in a room with the researcher who will ask you questions such as how did you come to Canada; how was it bringing up children in Canada; what was it like growing up as a child in an immigrant family. The questions will focus on your experiences as parents and children of living in an immigrant household and the role played by your cultural heritage in your home environment. With your permission, the researcher will audiotape your answers. This study will take place at location suited to both you and the researcher. This could be your home or at Ryerson University and will take approximately 1 to 2 hours to complete.

What is Experimental in this Study: None of the procedures used in this study is experimental in nature. That is, the procedure of asking you to tell about yourself in the form of a story or narrative is a common practice in everyday life and is also very common in what is called narrative research. This study uses techniques from narrative research and is not considered "experimental" in the scientific sense. It is what is called qualitative research, in that it does not use numbers or statistics to understand your answers. The results of the study and a copy (transcript) of your answers will be given to you.

Risks or Discomforts: Occasionally people feel uncomfortable when answering questions that ask about their family experiences. We do not believe that the questions we will ask will make you feel uncomfortable. However, if any aspect of this study makes you feel uncomfortable, you have the right not to answer any particular question, or to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Care will be taken that no identifying information is attached to the transcript of the interview and the tape is kept secure in a laboratory where only the researcher will have access to it. You may contact us at any point of time if you require further information on the study.

Benefits of the Study:

We anticipate that you will benefit from this study by sharing your story about living in an immigrant family in Canada, and how family and parenting practices within your home environment have been and are a positive resource for you. We also anticipate that you will help provide a better understanding of how immigrant parenting practices informed by cultural heritage are helpful and supportive to families. The knowledge gained in the study will be helpful in identifying adaptive practices of parenting in the context of immigration. Also, once we have analyzed the data, we will share the results with you. We will also provide you with a copy of the transcript. However, we cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your responses in this research will be confidential. We will not put your name or any legally identifying number or information as part of the answers to the questions. Rather, the questions and answers will be identified by number only. You will be asked to sign only this consent form (if you decide to participate), and it will be filed separately from the copy (transcript) of your answers. The data from this study will be held in a locked lab room for a five-year period, to which only investigator and supervisor will have access. After this period, the data will be destroyed.

Dissemination of the Research: Findings from the study will be used for writing a Masters level dissertation in the Psychology program. In addition, general findings may be used for the purpose of paper presentations, poster presentations and submitted to academic journals. No self-identifying information about the participants will be included in the dissemination of the results of the study.

Incentives to Participate: We appreciate the contributions of participants in our research. You will help broaden understanding of the way immigrant parents and children successfully negotiate cultural differences, and utilize resources to parent children in Canada.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask.  
If you have questions later about the research, you may contact:

Chanda Pundir, 416-651-1565  
[cpundir@psych.ryerson.ca](mailto:cpundir@psych.ryerson.ca), [chandapundir@gmail.com](mailto:chandapundir@gmail.com)

Dr. Wade Pickren, 416-979-5000, ex. 2632  
[wpickren@psych.ryerson.ca](mailto:wpickren@psych.ryerson.ca)

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a human participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board  
c/o Office of Research Services  
Ryerson University  
350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3  
416-979-5042

## Appendix B

### Demographic Information

Father      Mother

- 1) Age:
- 2) Education:
- 3) Occupation:
- 4) Marital Status:
- 5) Place of birth:
- 6) Nationality:
- 7) Number of years lived in Canada:
- 8) Year of Immigration
- 9) Languages you can speak

Son

Daughter

- 1) Age:
- 2) Education:
- 3) Occupation:
- 4) Marital Status:
- 5) Place of birth:
- 6) Nationality:
- 7) Languages you can speak:
- 8) Age when came to Canada

## Appendix C

### Pilot Interview

#### Parents

First set of warm up questions around the immigration experience-

- 1) How did you come to Canada?
- 2) What do you like about being here?
- 3) What do you miss about your country of origin?

Next set of questions about good parenting and a strong family?

- 4) Tell me what you remember about being brought up in a family in India?
- 5) What ideas of a family have you learnt from your culture?
- 6) What are the things, which contribute to a good upbringing of children?

Next set of questions focus on cultural transmission

- 7) How was it like bringing up children in Canada?
- 8) What role do you think your culture played in guiding you while bringing up your children?
- 9) How did you try to pass on your culture in the way you brought up your children?
- 10) What were some things you found helpful when you tried to maintain your culture for your children?
- 11) What were some things you found helpful while negotiating any differences between your own values and beliefs and mainstream society?
- 12) What are some strengths you see in the way you brought up your children?

#### Children

First set of warm up questions

- 13) Tell me something about your family and where you were born?

Questions about good parenting and strong family

- 14) What are some things, which contribute to a good upbringing in children?
- 15) What is a strong family?

Questions on cultural transmission

- 16) What role do you think your parent's culture played in the way they brought you up?
- 17) How did they try to pass on their culture to you? Or what are the things they did or said in order to provide you with a connection with your cultural heritage?
- 18) What were some things you found helpful in what they did?
- 19) What role will culture play in your parenting? What are some things you would like to do to maintain that connection?
- 20) What were some strengths you see in the way you were brought up?

## Interview Questions

### Parents

First set of warm up questions around the immigration experience-

- 1) When and how did you come to Canada?
- 2) How was it like coming and settling here in Canada?
- 3) What do you like about being here?
- 4) What do you miss about your country of origin? (while bringing up children)

Next set of questions focus on cultural transmission

- 5) How many children do you have?
- 6) How was it like bringing up children in an immigrant family?
- 7) How were you involved in your children's upbringing- mother father-rules, discipline
- 8) Did you feel any difference between your family and other families who were not immigrants?
- 9) You came from a particular cultural background. Did that play any role in guiding you while bringing up your children?
- 10) Do you think your own upbringing influenced you in any way? Way your parents brought you up?
- 11) What were some things you found helpful when you brought up your children?
- 12) What were some challenges you faced while bringing up children?
- 13) How did you cope?
- 14) Did you find yourself changing in any way to adapt better-some ways in which you changed
- 15) What were some things you found helpful when negotiating any differences between your own values and beliefs and the society at large?
- 16) What are some strengths you see in the way you brought up your children?
  
- 17) What do you feel about challenges faced by immigrant parents today?
- 18) How did you think immigrant parents should bring up their children?

Next set of questions to explore their ideas of good parenting and a strong family?

- 19) What ideas of a family have you learnt from your culture?
- 20) What are the things, which contribute to a good upbringing of children?
- 21) What role do you think parents play in bringing up their children?

## Children

### First set of warm up questions

- 1) Tell me something about your family and where you were born?
- 2) How was it like growing up in an immigrant family?
- 3) How were your mother and father involved in your growing up?
- 4) Did u feel there was a difference between your family and other families who were not immigrants?
- 5) Were there different things they were responsible for?
- 6) What were your parent's expectations while you were growing up?
- 7) Were there any rules in the house?
- 8) How did they discipline you?

### Questions on cultural transmission

- 9) What role do you think your parent's culture played in the way they brought you up?
- 10) Your parents came from a particular cultural background. How did that effect the way they brought you up?
- 11) What were some things you found helpful in what they did?
- 12) What are some challenges you faced while growing up in an immigrant family?
- 13) How did you cope?
- 14) Did you find yourself changing in any way to adapt better?
- 15) How do you feel today when you look back about the way you were brought up?
- 16) How would you like to bring up your children?
- 17) Do you think your own upbringing will influence you in any way? Way your parents brought you up?
- 18) What role will culture play in your parenting? What are some things you would like to do to maintain that connection?
- 19) What do you feel about the challenges faced by children growing within immigrant households today?
- 20) How do you think immigrant parents should bring up their children?

### Questions about good parenting and strong family

- 21) What role do you think parents play in bringing up their children?
- 22) What is most important when bringing up children?
- 23) What does a family mean to you? What is a strong family?

## Appendix D

### Children

- 1) Feeling of being different
- 2) Wishing one was not different
- 3) Preconceived notions
- 4) Coping with being different
- 5) Prior acculturation and parenting
- 6) Growing up city vs. rural
- 7) Socializing with community
  - Friends from community as support
  - Community as family
- 8) Comparing to other friends parenting (open about drinking, freedom, exploring, culture)
  - Comparing to other friends (negative experiences- other parents were more Restrictive, rebelled, sneaked)
  - Comparing to India (opportunities, expectations, education)
- 9) Change in culture overtime
- 10) Negotiating differences (parental expectations)
  - Negotiating differences (freedom- sleepover, trips peer pressure, music, Discipline, drinking)
  - Negotiating differences (dating, marriage)
  - Negotiating differences (gender)
- 11) Balancing the two worlds
  - Adapting (dating, marriage)
  - Adapting (expectations)
  - Adapting (restrictions-freedom)
  - Adapting (education) trade off education and freedom
  - Adapting (language)
- 12) Balancing was difficult (kids)
- 13) Giving up/caught (interests, career)
- 14) Flexibility is strength
- 15) Parents adapting (values- dating drinking)
  - Parents adapting (freedom- staying late, trying to be friends, food, activities)
  - Parents adapting (discipline)
- 16) Imp for parents to adapt/balance, be open
- 17) Adapting is a process for parents
- 18) Parents did not force culture
- 19) Parents gave freedom
- 20) Parents reminding of limits
- 21) Restrictions parents (dating)
  - Restrictions parents (freedom-friends, sleepover, working, clothes, school)
- 22) Communication with parents not open (dating, sex, period, relationships)
- 23) Wanting to be open with parents
- 24) Mother more involved in nurturing

- 25) Father- important things, education, fear
- 26) Expectation from parents-take care, seeing them, career, marriage)
- 27) Making decisions mindful of parental expectations
- 28) Respect of elders
- 29) Trust
- 30) Involved parenting/dedicated
- 31) Parenting is priority and focus for parents
- 32) Parent supportive during challenging times
- 33) Obligation towards family
- 34) Did not want to disappoint parents
- 35) Duty towards family
- 36) Parents sacrificed (came for kids)
- 37) Attributing personal success to parents
- 38) Need to make parent proud
- 39) Parents did not want kids to struggle
- 40) Overprotective
- 41) Choosing to be safe (safe decision making)
- 42) Emphasis on education, Achieving high
- 43) Influence of kids on parents
- 44) Stories parents tell (reinforce expectations, pride family, back home, and opportunities)
- 45) Parent proud people of family name (culture)
- 46) Talking about own upbringing
- 47) Parents as guides (career safe path)
- 48) Singing/dance/ music/drama/history
- 49) Language
- 50) Food
- 51) Religion
- 52) Parenting gender/sibling
- 53) Culture as natural part of living
- 54) Trips to India
- 55) Socializing with children
- 56) Younger not aware of culture
- 57) Teens wanting distance from culture
- 58) Disjoint with culture
- 59) Now coming back to culture
- 60) Seeing aspect of parenting as strengths now as adults (education, overprotective)
- 61) Parent in time wrap
- 62) Parents own upbringing influenced them
- 63) Parents experience (parenting was hard, dating, staying late)
- 64) Modeling parenting based on own experiences (left career, hierarchy, education, guide, activities, trips)
- 65) Changes in parenting for own kids
- 66) Concerns about passing on culture
- 67) Wish knew culture more (language)
- 68) Want own kids to grow around parents

- 69) Children holding onto culture (religion, food, rituals, language)
- 70) Having dual identity
- 71) More Canadian
- 72) Parents at rooted here
- 73) Family and identity
- 74) Family always there.
- 75) Family sacrifices for each other
- 76) Family before friends
- 77) Culture more accessible now
- 78) Community grown
- 79) Community as support is good
- 80) Challenges for new immigrants
- 81) Reasoning with children imp
- 82) Spending time builds trust
- 83) Parents need to adapt but balance freedom
- 84) Challenges kids now (maintain cultural identity)
- 85) Culture being unique vs. India

## Parents

- 1) Prior acculturation
- 2) Difference between rural and city
- 3) Parents adapting (language)  
Parents adapting (marriage)  
Parents adapting (parenting style)  
Parents adapting (dating)  
Parents adapting (giving freedom) Trade off education and freedom for children  
Parents adapting new culture- clothes, food, activities, traditions)
- 4) Adapting was hard
- 5) Negotiating differences (clothes)  
Negotiating differences (language, accent)  
Negotiating differences (religion)  
Negotiating differences (freedom for children- drinking, partying, school dance, Friends, working)  
Negotiating differences (no support/help)  
Negotiating differences (dating, sex, living-in, marriage, respect)  
Negotiating differences (context-climate)
- 6) Feeling of people having preconceived ideas
- 7) Feeling of being judged
- 8) Feeling of being different
- 9) Coping with being judged
- 10) Helping children's cope with difference
- 11) Feeling lonely (Missing family, Lack of connections)
- 12) No support/ help parenting
- 13) Adjusting to a different context- Different food, Different climate, systems
- 14) Finding job was challenging
- 15) Adjusting to arranged marriage (wife) upon coming
- 16) Not being judged/being accepted
- 17) Finding job was easy
- 18) Support for new parents
- 19) Encouragement for diversity (no one forced values, govern help, school trips, language, rights)
- 20) Initial fascination upon coming (cars, clean, no honking, roads, traffic rules)
- 21) Admiration for host culture (work ethics, transparency, health care, opportunities)
- 22) Wife taking care children
- 23) Trade off wife working and children's care
- 24) Father-education, provider
- 25) Friends in community as support  
Community socializing  
Community imp for parenting
- 26) Family as support
- 27) Dance/singing/ drama/tabla
- 28) Food
- 29) Language

- 30) Reading/books, History, epics
- 31) Stories about back home (competition, opportunities )
- 32) Telling children about own upbringing and family
- 33) Religion/festivals/cultural association/rituals
- 34) Children holding onto to culture (clothes, food, pranam, calling mom and dad, respect, movies, religion, language, donate temple, )
- 35) Recognizing children's experience as challenging (dating, peer pressure, academics, work)
- 36) Children gave up/juggling
- 37) Change in parenting (siblings, gender)
- 38) Trust
- 39) Did not force culture
- 40) Children/parenting was priority
- 41) Working for kids future
- 42) Respect for elders
- 43) Reasoning with children
- 44) Freedom for children (career, going out, friends, no schedule, food)
- 45) Overprotective
- 46) Family central to character building
- 47) Open communication
- 48) Modeling values for children
- 49) Emphasis on education
- 50) Education equates to success
- 51) Trade off education and freedom for children
- 52) Family support challenges (children)
- 53) Keeping eye on friends
- 54) Spending time with children
- 55) Children well adjusted/pride
- 56) Comparing to India (education, corruption, dignity of labor, no hierarchy, people open, freedom, opportunities, competition, activities, values-respect)
- 57) Feeling rooted Canadian Built life in Canada, roots here
- 58) Kids are Canadian
- 59) Indian Culture equates to identity roots
- 60) Not aware of culture when young
- 61) Disjoint with culture teens
- 62) Coming back to culture adults
- 63) Parent as guides
- 64) Parenting learning process
- 65) Proud incorporated both cultures
- 66) Wish children knew more culture
- 67) Parents fear (drugs, )
- 68) Cultural resources more accessible now
- 69) Growth in community
- 70) Imp to respect children
- 71) Stories immigrants hear
- 72) Immigrants with children face challenges

- 73) Parents mindful of children's experience
- 74) Need to adapt for immigrant parents (career choice open to mixing, culture, Freedom)
- 75) Need to balance two cultures
- 76) Flexibility is strength
- 77) Parenting was hard
- 78) Restrictions
- 79) Family pride
- 80) Trips to India
- 81) Culture important parenting

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FRONT-SIDE VIEW

