Exploring Meanings of Identity, Selfhood, and Migration in the Lives of First-Generation Gujarati Asian Indian Americans: A Narrative Study

Reena Sheth

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EXPLORING MEANINGS OF IDENTITY, SELFHOOD, AND MIGRATION IN THE LIVES OF FIRST-GENERATION GUJARATI ASIAN INDIAN AMERICANS: A NARRATIVE STUDY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Reena Sheth

April 2015
EXPLORING MEANINGS OF IDENTITY, SELFHOOD, AND MIGRATION IN THE LIVES OF FIRST-GENERATION GUJARATI ASIAN INDIAN AMERICANS:
A NARRATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING MEANINGS OF IDENTITY, SELFHOOD, AND MIGRATION IN THE LIVES OF FIRST-GENERATION GUJARATI ASIAN INDIAN AMERICANS:

A NARRATIVE STUDY

By

Reena Sheth

April 2015

Dissertation supervised by Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D.

Asian Indians today are the fastest growing Asian group in the United States. This increase is especially evident post 1965, when changes in immigration policy allowed for greater numbers of immigrants from India. This group of immigrants is poorly represented in the literature, and the present study is an attempt to address this paucity in research within cultural psychology. Central to the present research are questions of migration, self, and identity, specifically, identity of ‘second wave’ Gujarati Asian Indian immigrants in the United States living in the larger Pittsburgh area. Methodologically, this study is qualitative in nature, utilizing in-depth interview data from four first generation Gujarati Asian Indians. In addition to the description and interpretation of the four participants’ narratives, each account was analyzed using the holistic-content and the holistic-form analysis approach proposed by Lieblich, Mashiach, and Zilber (1998).
One of the significant findings of the study was the emergence of a complex and dialectical notion of ‘home’ in and through all four participants’ stories. Migration was the background against which each participant attempted to construct and understand meanings of ‘home.’ All participants privileged their meaningful and emotionally based everyday interactions and relationships with others, and thus emphasized a relational, interpersonal meaning of home. In the context of the dialectic of home and migration, participants constructed complex yet ambivalent, multiple yet liminal notions of home.

The sense of being at home, for all four participants, was intertwined with their sense of identity. Each participant’s migration inaugurated multiple moments that called upon them to wrestle with questions of selfhood. Ultimately, Indian immigrants of this study both displayed and resisted certain forms of identity to define their sense of “who they are” in the United States. The theme of ‘otherness’ illuminated how assignation of generic and marked otherness, race, and ethnicity mediated participants’ sense of self, at times restricting while at other times, empowering them to inhabit multiple, polyphonic identities.

Finally, the findings of the study are examined with and against the main discourses of migrant experiences that dominate the existing literature—models of acculturation, acculturative stress and its impact on mental health, and notions of identity and culture. In so doing, the present study further contributes to the field of cultural psychology.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who have always believed in me unconditionally and unreservedly, constantly reminding me of the possibility to achieve the impossible, even in the midst of seemingly unsurmountable challenges and self-doubt. Their gift of love, perseverance, resilience, and most of all, a deep sense of humility constantly illuminated and inspired my path to this achievement and has filled me, today and forever, with an eternal sense of hope and inspiration.
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I express immense gratitude to my dissertation director Dr. Leswin Laubscher for chairing this dissertation during a very difficult time of my life, and for supporting me throughout this process. Dr. Laubscher, I am forever indebted to you, first, for your willingness to accept and to stay with this dissertation, and secondly, for your tremendous generosity, understanding, and patience when I struggled again and again to complete this project. I would never have completed this dissertation without your sustained encouragement and guidance. I am thankful to you for providing invaluable insights at various stages of the dissertation which prompted creative and diverse thinking. Your ability to keep the project grounded was of vital importance in its completion. You have been the most wonderful teacher throughout my doctoral training and have inspired me by your pursuit of excellence, gentleness, and sense of humor.

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I am indebted to the four participants of this dissertation for their generosity and willingness to share their personal stories with me. Without their time and support this dissertation would have just been a dream. My thanks go to them, especially, for inviting and making me a part of the warm, welcoming community of Gujaratis in Pittsburgh. I feel that they gave me a home away from home. In sharing, so openly, their experiences of the journey from India to the United States, they have gifted new meanings and metaphors to my own journey of movement and migration. Thanks to these four participants and their stories, my journey of self-discovery has enriched many-folds.

I express many thanks to the entire faculty of the Psychology Program at Duquesne University for making it possible for me to complete this dissertation. Time and again, they patiently offered their support and empathy by enabling me to see this project to its fruition. Thanks also to Marilyn Henline who have been an immense source of guidance and encouragement throughout my doctoral training. Her bright smile and positive attitude will always stay with me.

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CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTION

The Asian Indian population in the United States is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the country. It more than doubled in size between 1990 and 2000 from approximately 800,000 to more than 1.65 million persons, accounting for 25% of foreign born individuals in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002) According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau report, published in 2010, out of the total U.S. population, 17.3 million people or 5.6% of all people in the United States, identified as Asian, either alone or in a hyphenated combination with one or more other races (2010). As the third largest Asian population group in the United States behind people of Chinese and Filipino descent, 3.2 million Asian Indians represent 19% of the total Asian population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the same U.S. Census Bureau report, there was a 69.8% change in the number of Asian Indians in America from 2000 (1,718,778) to 2010 (2,918,807; 2010). This group of Asians is projected to have a population rise to approximately 20.2 million people in the U.S. by 2020 (Sue, 1994). Within this growing Asian Indian population in America, Gujaratis and Punjabis form two of the larger ethnic communities with their unique cultural, lingual, and religious backgrounds among a plethora of other similar ethnically diverse groups such as Bengalis, Marathis, Tamils, Telugus, and Parsis. Yet, even as Asian Indians in the United States continue to make their presence felt, a report from the Surgeon General (2001) stated that there is minimal information available about the South Asian Indian population in the U.S., and it may well be time to heed Durvasula and Mylvaganan’s (1994) charge seriously: “The growing numbers of Asian Indians in the United States make it a demographic imperative that we begin to study this immigration group in its own right” (p. 99).

I am a relatively recent member of this growing number of Asian Indians in the United
States, having come to the United States in 2002. Following my initial academic work, I decided to pursue doctoral studies and had just moved to Pittsburgh to do so. As it happened, I had an aunt that lived in Pittsburgh, and I decided to stay with her for a few weeks until I found my own apartment. My aunt has been living in Pittsburgh for the past thirty years, having moved here from India following her marriage to my uncle who came to the United States to pursue a master’s degree in engineering. After graduation, my uncle worked as a production engineer for a major organization in the area, and thirty years later, they were still here. One afternoon, as I sat poring over apartment advertisements, my aunt remarked how much easier it was for me to find an apartment now, compared to when they had first arrived in the United States. She recounted numerous incidents when she was told that the apartment was not for “foreigners” and encountered people who even refused to open the door for her to see the apartment for rent. Her comments made me acutely aware of a struggle around race, ethnicity and discrimination experienced by many first generation Indians in the United States as early immigrants specifically, but also more generally about the hardships and challenges faced by immigrants and émigrés generally. More importantly, though, our conversation provided some motivation for my own efforts to answer the question of what it means to be a recent first-generation Gujarati Indian who had come to the United States at the beginning of the 21st century, grounded as it now was in a larger, multilayered historical and cultural story of Indian American immigration in the United States. Through numerous encounters with first-generation Indians over the last ten years in the United States, this very question has been foregrounded time and time again, more often than not complicated, or qualified, by other identities-being a woman, a recent first-generation Indian in America, a Gujarati, and a South Asian, for example. Perhaps, then, it comes as small surprise that this general question, a question so intimately and intricately also a
question of identity or self, is also the question of this dissertation; nor that the manner of its posing and its response is in this hermeneutic, interpretive register. Through this dissertation research I want to generate voices and stories that illuminate lived experiences of a specific group of first-generation Asian Indians, namely first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians who came to the U.S. as part of the ‘second wave’ of Asian Indian migration to the U.S. after 1965. Central to the present study is the question of identity: what is it to “be” and/or become a first-generation Gujarati Indian American in the U.S, and how is this identity and/or identification maintained and articulated? In other words, this dissertation is concerned with exploring questions of identity performance over time through narratives generated by first-generation Gujarati Indian Americans. The study is an attempt to chart the identitary journey of post-1965 ‘second-wave’ Gujarati Asian Indians to the United States, exploring how they negotiate, resist, accept, question, and change meanings of identity and selfhood over time so as to shape their lives in a complex and dynamic context of migration, culture, ethnicity, and language.

**The Present Study: Purpose and Motivation**

While there exists a sizeable extant literature on immigrant experiences in general, research on the Asian Indian experience is much more scant, with most such research focusing on second-generation Asian Indians. More recent literature on Asian Indian immigration in the United States highlights its focus on the exploration of various cultural, ethnic, educational, and socio-economic experiences and their interaction with on-going identity formation of mainly second-generation Asian Indians. In contrast, research on *first generation* Asian Indians is starkly lacking. Scholars of Indian immigration to the United States have thus far neglected the specificities of identity construction for the first generation Asian Indians. Little attention has been paid to the implications for immigrant identities, culture, or politics of a generation that
formed the ground for the emergence of a unique ethnic Asian Indian identity in the United States and continues to inform the ongoing identity formation of not only second-generation Indian-Americans but also more recent immigrants from India like myself. First and foremost, this study hopes to address this paucity in scientific research by witnessing and presenting the stories of immigration and selfhood of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians.

The limited literature in the area is overwhelmingly characterized by a tendency to categorize and explain this group’s experiences in simple, unidimensional, and dichotomized ‘either-or’ ways. The result of this implicit tendency is the emergence of a narrow, biased, and highly limited view of Asian Indian identity and lived experience. In contrast, this study uses a ‘both-and’ orientation to explore and extend the understanding of the lives of ‘second wave’ first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians and their ideas of personhood. Koshy (1998) and Viswesweran (1997), each focusing on the interplay between race, ethnicity, and identity for Asian Indians, insist that studies of Indian American racial and ethnic identity must examine the complexities, contradictions, and conflicts found in the space between the acts of deliberative assertion expressed by the Indian American community and the acts that position and situate them as having fixed racial identities. This study is one such attempt to explore these complexities.

Bhatia (2007) argues that discussions about the self—which are intensified by issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality—challenge the grand narratives of a stable, bounded, contained, and Cartesian self. In a similar vein, this study proceeds from a critical position vis-à-vis the dominant academic sense of a static, ideal-typical cultural identity. It hopes to demonstrate that identities are the result of a dynamic back and forth between everyday practical activities, and narrations of reality, a form of life (social reality) constructing
and being constructed by a sense of identity. Bhatia (2007) points out that rather than proceeding from the assumptions of a fixed, stable, unified, cultural self that goes through various acculturation trajectories, a more fluid and politicized understanding of migrant identity is needed as it will be continuously open to engagement and negotiations.

A tremendous increase in transnational migration has fundamentally changed meanings of concepts such as culture, identity, community, ethnicity, and development. In turn, these concepts have implications for understanding how individuals construct and reconstruct the meanings of their identities. The goal of this study is to illuminate how a specific group of migrants to the U.S. maintain, resist, and reinvent their identities in the context of these tremendous cultural changes and conflict. Through this objective, the present study hopes to further contribute to the field of cultural psychology.

The idea for this study is grounded in and is a direct result of my personal experiences, living as an Indian in America for the past ten years. The question of what is Indian about me has been my constant companion in these years and this study is one more response to that question of identity. Clearly, though, it seemed to me that the question is neither new to me, or my generation, but that the response across time and circumstance may show varied or divergent dynamics, even as it grapples with a supposedly similar question or concern. As a result, and given my argument above that there is very little research on first-generation Indians, this study envisions a response to be more than a personal attempt to answer a personal process, but also and perhaps more deliberately, to locate the response in the struggle of those very first generation Indians who have grappled with this question for the past four decades. I believe that those struggles deserve articulation, and may offer important insights to a contemporary world that may be profoundly affected by them.
American society is changing rapidly, especially in its ethnic make-up. Similar to the ‘Baby Boomers,’ the first-generation Asian Indians are approaching retirement. It can be hypothesized that the long-term physical and psychological well-being of this group of individuals is related to and impacted by the way they perceive themselves and their identity. Equally, then, for researchers, physicians, mental health providers, and policy makers, an understanding of how first-generation Asian Indians make sense of their identity and its impact on their help-seeking behavior, financial, and other choices will be invaluable. Relevant, culturally specific research is integral to informing the practice of psychotherapy and promoting mental health in diverse populations. The purpose of this research is consequently also to further contribute to the development of the research base for the needs of Asian Indians.

Through an exploration of the different ways in which ‘second wave’ first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians deal with issues of ‘home’ and culture, this study aims to demonstrate the changing nature of identity and community. Specifically, relying on the accounts of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians who immigrated to the U.S. between 1965 and 1980 following the 1965 Immigration Act, this study hopes to facilitate narratives that address the questions:

1. How do first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians continue to perceive, make sense of, and respond to their immigrant experience?
2. How does the experience of immigration structure and maintain Gujarati Asian Indian identity?
3. What are specific meaning making processes involved in the understanding of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians with respect to their racial and ethnic identity in the U.S.?
4. What is the meaning of migration in the lives of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians and specifically its impact on their identity?
5. What experiences and themes do they emphasize in their stories of identity construction and personhood, and what do they leave out?

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this research, some terms need closer delineation, if not definition. *First-generation Asian Indian*, for example, is used to refer to an individual who was born in India and immigrated to the U.S. after 18 years of age. This individual may or may not be a U.S. citizen. *Second-generation Asian Indian* is used to reference an individual born and raised in the U.S. by first-generation Asian Indian parents and is a U.S. citizen. *‘First wave’ Asian Indian immigration* refers to the period of major Asian Indian immigration to the U.S. between 1907-1924. *‘Second wave’ Asian Indian immigration* delimits the significant growth in number of Asian Indian immigrants to the U.S. that began in 1965 as a result of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. *The participants for this study will be first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians that came to the U.S. during this ‘second wave’ of immigration. Gujaratis* are so identified based on the geographic location of the state of Gujarat, situated on the Western coast of India. Their spoken language is Gujarati and they are from Hindu, Jain, and Muslim religions. With their specific language, food (largely vegetarian) and clothing customs, they form an ethnically unique community within and outside of India.

**Organization of Chapters**

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one is a general introduction to the subject matter further contextualized within a personal impetus for the study. Chapter two presents the academic literature by discussing major themes and interests of three main discourses on experiences of first and second generation Asian Indian Americans—these are models of acculturation, acculturative stress and its impact on mental health, and psychoanalytic
theories on immigration and identity transformation focusing on trauma, mourning, and fantasy. In addition, this chapter also presents and contrasts existing research which proceeds from an interpretive or hermeneutic stance that allows for a fluid, contextualized, and historically situated understanding of migrant identity.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the present study. Beginning with a discussion of the justification for conceptualizing the present research in a hermeneutic/interpretive conceptual framework, it then proceeds to present method of participant selection, brief descriptions of each participant demographics, use of in-depth interview as a method of data collection, and data analysis method proposed by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998). The chapter also includes a discussion of my dual role of ‘researcher as translator’ in the study and its implications.

Chapter four presents the findings of the present study. It first presents brief stories of four participants of the study interspersed with discussion of multiple themes arrived at after carrying out holistic analysis of content and form on the narratives. Holistic analysis of form revealed that all four participants organized their narratives in a sequential plot consisting of theses stages: i) Before the journey ii) Preparing for the journey iii) Arrival in the U.S. and early challenges iv) Journey of making home/finding job and v) Journey of building family and community. Some of the themes that emerged through the holistic analysis of content were ‘feeling at home,’ ‘who am I?’ ‘should we stay or should we go?’ and raising a family.

Chapter five is the discussion chapter, where I attempt an integrated and summative narrative of the study’s findings – and well towards the study’s stated aim and goal to contribute to the understanding of first-generation Gujarati Asian immigrant experience in particular and psychological research on migration and its interaction with identity construction of immigrants
in general. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the contributions of the study and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO—REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A significant impetus for this study comes from the frustration I have felt with the existing literature on immigrant identity experiences. Frequently I feel that it does not talk about me, or the people I know. This is a combination of how researchers implicitly make certain assumptions, define constructs, use certain methodologies, and refrain from exploring multiple realities that co-exist in participants’ experiences.

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians, and aims: 1) to trace the major themes and interests of that literature in order to provide a research context within which to situate the present study; 2) to also locate the existing literature within larger historical and social context; 3) to provide initial critical reflections on literature that has been occupied with developing universal, linear, and fixed models and theories of immigrant identity, acculturation, and adaptation. In other words, an ahistorical approach to immigrant experience and identity formation; and finally, 4) to present and contrast existing research which proceeds from an interpretive or hermeneutic stance that allows for a fluid, contextualized, and historically situated understanding of migrant identity.

**Gujarati Asian Indians in America**

According to the 2000 U.S. census, the Asian Indian community is one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in the United States (Bhatia, 2007). As stated earlier, the Asian Indian population grew by 69.1% from 2000 to 2010. Seven of every ten immigrants in America today was born elsewhere (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). Most of these immigrants voluntarily decided to move the U.S.A; they are not war victims or refugees forced to leave their home countries. The significant growth in the number of Asian Indian immigrants to the U.S. began in 1965 when the *Immigration and Naturalization Act* came into effect, lifting a
discriminatory ban against immigration from Asia. The ban had been in force since the 1917 Immigration Act (also known as the *Asiatic Barred Zone Act*). For India, the visa limit increased from 100 to 20,000 per year. Between 1966 and 1976, 83 percent of the Indians who immigrated qualified for the new law’s preference for professionals, scientists, and workers with scarce skills. By all accounts, the immigration reform of 1965 is considered as being most significant and profoundly influential for the history of Asian Indian immigration to the U.S. The 1965 Immigration Act fundamentally changed the background of the Asian Indian migrants in the U.S. (Bhatia, 2007). Unlike the ‘first-wave’ of Punjabi Sikh migration of the early 20th century, the second wave of Asian Immigrants tended to be elite—educated, highly skilled, and urban (Das Gupta, 1997).

In the aftermath of the 1965 U.S. immigration policy changes, immigration to the U.S. from Indian was mostly of a select group of English-speaking men and women with high educational qualifications and a certain amount of financial ability to emigrate. The resources and cultural capital that this group of immigrants brought with them allowed for a foothold in the job market, to fight job market discrimination, and to achieve a certain amount of economic mobility (Dutta, 1981) that may not have been the case or experience for immigrants from other places or in other historical periods. In the immigrant research literature on Asian Indians in the U.S., including this study, this period of immigration is referred to as 'second wave immigration' following the so called ‘first wave,’ from 1907 to 1924.

According to Bhattacharya and Schoppelrey (2004), Indian immigrants in the post 1965 wave generally sought a better life than they had in India and expected an “American” life in the U.S.A. They wanted jobs with high salaries, own big houses and raise their children to be prosperous and otherwise like “American” children (Zhou, 2004). Bhattacharya (2008) argues
that the aspirations and beliefs in life success of post 1965 Indian immigrants, for themselves and their families, resembled “mainstream” middle-class Americans’ values and beliefs and notes that “assimilation” became the model for Indian immigrants to translate their aspirations and beliefs into reality (p. 69).

Gujaratis formed the largest number of this ‘second wave’ of immigration after 1965, and for the most part they were characterized, as a group, by high socio-economic background, education and skill (Hickey, 2006). Gujaratis came to the United States after 1965 in order to pursue higher education as well as entrepreneurial opportunities in business. As of 2000, there are approximately 150,000 Gujaratis in the U.S. (Sahoo, 2006), and they tend to be well-educated professionals with above-average incomes who reside in suburban areas near large cities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report (2010) there are 1,417,000 people in the U.S. who speak Gujarati, Hindi or other Indic languages (e.g. Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu) at home; Gujaratis comprised 299,000 of these numbers.

‘Identity’ in Psychology

Central to the present research is the question of identity, specifically, identity of first generation Gujarati Asian Indian immigrants in America. For the purposes of this research, it is important to present and briefly summarize a broad understanding of the concept of ‘identity’ that will inform this project as this term carries multiple meanings and implications in the existing literature as well as in popular usage.

The concept of ‘identity’ has been present in psychology for a long time, and in many instances central to it. Processes of identity formation, relations of identity to self, psyche, concepts of personality, behavior, and attitudes have all been brought to bear on identity and identification research and theories. Another significant area of research on identity formation in
psychology has focused on its developmental process. This body of work relies on stage specific models and attempts to bring a developmental focus to identity processes (e.g. Erickson, 1950, 1968). In the last few decades, researchers have begun to question some of the underlying universalist and essentialist assumptions of the research on identity formation and performance in the context of culture, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and migration related differences. The present study situates its concept of identity within this critical literature, and challenges identity as “sameness, which situates it outside the periphery of culture, race, politics or power.” (Gilroy, 1997, p. 301).

Central to the present study are constructions of self and identity not as fixed, absolute essence, but rather as creations of cultural discourses, history, and power. The concept of identity and its formation and relationship to selfhood are significantly mediated and impacted by one’s race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability, nationality, and migration, making it possible to live and articulate multiple identities such as ‘cultural,’ ‘ethnic’, ‘gendered’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘sexual.’ Of relevance to the present study are interactions between identity construction and articulation in the context of transnational migration. Notions of identity are critical to processes of transnational crossings, backwards and forwards, ongoing and continuous, physically in terms of actual movements across time and space and psychologically in terms of the emotions, desires, dreams, longing and nostalgia that configure an individual’s experience of identity (Thapan, 2005). Identities are transformed by their location in history, politics, culture, language, and geography. Immigrant identities get articulated differently in each generation, taking on new meanings and connotations. It can be argued that cultural identity is not fixed and absolute. It is constructed and actively maintained across difference through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth, within the framework of, and across, time and place (Thapan, 2005). The
effect of the past is inevitably present in the construction, maintenance, and ongoing experience of identity but this is not a fixed, ‘factual’ past. There is a relation to this past and immigrants engage in a constant negotiation with it, thereby playing a vital role in the reconstruction of cultural identity in the host society (Gemignani, 2011). “The fluidity of experience in the construction of identity between the past and present, the imagined, desired and the real and contemporary, unfolds unconsciously in the larger ideological framework of the state, religion, and society” (Thapan, 2005, p. 26). Thus, through an exploration of the different ways in which ‘second wave’ first-generation Guajarati Asian Indians deal with issues of ‘home’ and culture, this study aims to demonstrate the changing nature of identity and community. Specifically, relying on the accounts of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians who immigrated to the U.S. between 1965 and 1980 following the 1965 Immigration Act, this study hopes to facilitate narratives that address the research questions.

**Acculturation and Ethnic Identity**

Psychological research on migration has mainly focused on an interweaving of larger themes such as cultural adjustment, adaptation, assimilation (Gordon, 1964; Hirshcman, 1983; Park & Burgess, 1969) and acculturation (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986) by a number of different migratory groups to the U.S. in the last few decades. This area of research frames the incorporation of different groups in U.S. society in terms of either the loss (Handlin, 1951) or persistence (Alba, 1990; Gans, 1979; Glazer & Moyhnihan, 1970; Waters, 1990) of ethnicity.

One of the earliest models of understanding migration is ‘assimilation’. Grounded in the ‘melting pot’ notion of identity adjustment, this model proposes that migrants tend to give up their traditional ties, lifestyles and adopt a more ‘American’ way of life (Gordon, 1964; Hirschman, 1983; Park & Burgess, 1969). Although this model has come under significant
criticism (see below in the section ‘models of acculturation and integration’), it is still pervasive as an implied value in much of the research literature on migration.

Within the field of cross-cultural psychology, more recently, ‘acculturation’ has emerged as the predominant model of understanding migration (Berry, 1990; Berry, Triamble, & Olmedo, 1986; Olmedo, 1979; Krishnan & Berry, 1992). According to Berry (2005), early European immigration to the U.S. and some of the concerns related to its effects prompted first interest in acculturation. He defines acculturation as follows: “the term psychological acculturation refers to the process by which individuals change, both by being influenced by contact with other culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes under way in their own culture” (Berry, 1990, p. 210).

**Models of Acculturation**

Eldering (2005) points out that all models of acculturation explicitly or implicitly distinguish between a cultural and a structural component/subprocess in the development of “acculturation” or “assimilation.” The cultural component encompasses change of cultural patterns (behaviors, roles, attitudes, material objects, etc.) and the structural components have to do with large-scale entrance into the institutions of the host society.

Unidimensional models of acculturation are characterized by a process where immigrant individuals are constantly moving towards greater identification with the host/mainstream culture. Moreover, this process is unidirectional. Thus, in the unidimensional model of acculturation, it is theorized as the giving up of the heritage culture and completely assimilating into the host culture (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001; Gans, 1979; Gordon, 1964; and Suinn, 1999). In general, this unidimensional or classic assimilation model assumes that the ethnic/heritage group and the host group will follow a ‘straight line’ converging over time in
terms of norms, values, characteristics, and behaviors. Niyogi (2010) points out that the early versions of this model have been criticized as “Anglo-conformist” because immigrant groups were depicted as conforming to unchanging middle-class, white, Protestant values. Some mid-century researchers argued that ethnic assimilation cannot be assumed to be inevitable and that assimilation of many immigrant groups is more complex “…and in many instances ‘blocked’ by virtue of race, religion, or some other socio-cultural characteristic deemed unpalatable to the normative mainstream of the day” (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970; Greeley, 1974; Novak, 1973).

In contrast to the unidimensional model, Berry (1997) has proposed a bidimensional model of acculturation where the individual develops relationships with both the heritage- as well as the host culture. Thus, Berry (1997) uses acculturation for structural as well as cultural subprocesses. Acculturation, in this bidimensional model, is a process that results in changes in both the individual as well as larger social structures and institutions that s/he interacts with or comes in contact with. Berry (1990) has suggested that the acculturation strategies of ethnic minority groups can best be described in terms of two independent dimensions: (1) retention of one’s cultural traditions, and (2) establishment and maintenance of relationships with the larger society. When these two central dimensions are considered simultaneously, a conceptual framework is generated which posits four acculturation strategies. These are: assimilation (loss of heritage culture and adoption of dominant culture), integration (adopting aspects of both cultures), separation (retaining heritage culture and eschewing values of host culture) and marginalization (confusion and marginalization from both cultures) (see Figure 1).
Acculturative Stress and Mental Health

Acculturation has generated a significant amount of research that deals with acculturation attitudes and acculturative stress. The acculturation model summarized above emphasizes cultural change over time by looking at changes in language, dress, attitudes, value orientation, degree of urbanization, educational-occupational status, family size, and so on (Kaul, 1983; Krishnan & Berry, 1992; Moghaddam, Ditto, & Taylor, 1990; Olmedo, 1979; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988).

Immigrants often experience a loss of resources, lifestyle changes, a shift in ideas, life systems, and social environments (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, 2003, p.145). According to Berry (2005), acculturation can generally take place gradually and with minimal difficulty and conflict, but it can also result in considerable acculturative stress for the individual. The difficulties and cultural conflict that an individual can experience during acculturation is defined

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as acculturation stress. Acculturative stress, according to Al-Issa (1997), “affects both physical and mental health and may be related to poor adaptation” (p.13-16).

As it has been theorized by Berry (2005), the cultural distance between an individual’s culture of origin and the host culture is a significant mediator of acculturative stress and there are considerable differences between the American and the Indian cultures. A significant amount of research on the relationship between acculturation, acculturative stress, and mental health proposes a correlation between the kind of acculturative strategy taken up by the immigrant individual (assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization) and various indices of well-being and identity conflict (Hans, 2001; Hwang, Chun, Takeuchi, Myers, & Siddartha, 2005; Sam & Berry, 1995). Hovey and Kind (1996) and Chirboga, Jang, Banks, and Kim (2007) suggested that acculturative stress has an impact on well-being, and Hwang, Chun, Takeuchi, Myers, and Siddartha (2005) reported more specifically that acculturative stress has an impact on the well-being of Asian Indians.

Some researchers have found that adopting an assimilation or separation strategy of acculturation is associated with higher levels of acculturative stress and higher risk for psychological mal-adjustment (Hans, 2001; Hwang, Chun, Takeuchi, Myers, & Siddartha, 2005; Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgudi, 1991). Lowering of socio-economic status upon entering the host/new country and culture, language problems, lack of social support, cultural incompatibility related to and resulting from attitudes towards dating, family, solidarity, sex, and marriage have all been found to be major sources of cultural conflict and acculturative stress among immigrants and have been associated with lowered feelings of self-worth, sense of belonging, and overall life satisfaction (Berry, 1997; Hans, 2001; Sandhu, Portes, & McPhee, 1996).
Acculturation and Asian Indians

As stated earlier, there is a paucity of research with Asian Indians, but few studies that have focused on patterns of acculturation and strategies adopted by Asian Indians have identified that they tend to use integration as a model for acculturation (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1997, Krishnan & Berry, 1992; Kurien & Ghosh, 1983; Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri, 1996). Integration for Asian Indians involves using heritage traditions at home and host culture behaviors at the workplace. A higher tendency to use integration as a model of acculturation among Asian Indians have been associated with lowered acculturative stress (Krishnan, & Berry, 1992; Yamamoto, 2009). On the other hand, some studies have highlighted an association between use of separation and marginalization as models of acculturation by Asian Indians and higher acculturative stress (Dona & Berry, 1994; Kurian & Ghosh, 1983; Oommen, 1996; Saroop, 2003). Acculturative stress have been found to play a significant role in psychological distress for Asian Indians impacting self-esteem, inter and intrapersonal relationships, depression, and anxiety (Kapadia, 2009; Organista, Organista, & Kuraski, 2003; Prabhughate, 2010; Sood, 2009).

Although this body of research on acculturation, acculturative stress, and its relationship to psychological adjustment and migrant identity formation has contributed significantly to our understanding of various challenges and needs of immigrant populations, including Asian Indians, in the U.S., it also reveals underlying assumptions and biases in findings that rely on an implicit ‘either-or’ polarity. These studies formulate constructions of migrant identities and their experiences in terms of narrow, fixed, and ahistorical dichotomies such as “traditional”/modern,” “western”/“Indian or Asian Indian,” “better adjusted”/“maladjusted” and so on. These studies provide little to no information on definitions of any of these categories, subjective
meanings ascribed to them by participants themselves, or how they are experienced (Kumar, 2000). This literature assumes a ‘disease/illness’ model whereby complex, contradictory, and dynamic migratory experiences of immigrant populations are reduced to the degree of success they are able to achieve in integrating or assimilating to the host culture. One can argue that underlying this research is an assumption that there is a ‘right/healthy’ or ‘wrong/unhealthy’ way of being an immigrant.

Bhatia and Ram (2009) offer a number of critical points for this dominant research literature around acculturation and integration. According to them, Berry and his colleagues describe the integration strategy as being an end goal of an immigrant’s acculturation without explaining the process by which such an end goal would be achieved. Similarly, missing from their discussion on “integration strategy” is how issues of conflict, power, and asymmetry affect many immigrants’ acculturation process, for example, it assumes that both the majority and minority cultures have equal status and power (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). It can be argued that although integration may be a worthy goal to achieve, it is likely that for most of the immigrants, their identity work is negotiated in fluid, dynamic, interminable and often unstable cultural sites. Dasgupta (1998) argues that framing the research of identity work carried out by Asian Indians in assimilation or cultural pluralism/integration models has been the dominant discourse in ethnicity research, but it ignores its nationalistic investment in positing one nation-state, the United States, as the significant context of immigrant identity formation. One result of framing the research in this manner is the presentation of immigrant cultures in the United States as isolated from current and historical links between the receiving and sending countries. Similarly, in the conventional interpretation, immigrants either shed their old, traditional ways to form new ones or remain culturally distinctive in a way that is uniquely “un-American.” The
loss/persistence or the ‘melting pot’ versus the ‘salad bowl’ debate is intimately tied to the naming of certain practices as traditional and other as ethnic-American (Dasgupta, 1998). The view of culture that is presented in these studies is that of a static, timeless, fixed, and ahistorical entity that considers the West as its point of reference and marginalizes the ‘other.’ If culture, in these models, is assumed to be static, migration is presented as a simplistic, unidirectional process without complexities, dynamics, negotiations, and ambivalences that infuse the transnational migration experiences of the people who experience it. Bhatia and Ram (2009) argue that the acculturation journey is not a teleological trajectory that has a fixed end-point but instead has to be continuously negotiated.

**Psychoanalytic Understanding of Immigration as a Psychological Experience**

Studies adopting a broadly psychoanalytic viewpoint form another area within the literature on immigration and its impact on identity transformation. Somewhat reflecting the literature on acculturative stress and its impact on mental health discussed earlier, this body of research deploys concepts such as mourning, loss and trauma, separation and individuation (Akhtar, 1995; Garza-Guerrero, 1974), and fantasies of actual and imagined visits home (Tummala-Narra, 2009) in order to explore the psychological impact of immigration.

**Loss, Trauma, Mourning, and Its Psychological Impact**

Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) were among the first psychoanalytic theorists to underscore the pervasiveness of mourning in immigration and to argue that the experience of mourning is mediated by the circumstances that drive the immigrant to leave in the first place. These could range from economic crises or economic opportunity to the experience of being a victim of overwhelming political repression or genocide. According to Ainslie (1998), various kinds of losses are commonly experienced by immigrants, including separation from family and
friends; reduced access to language, cultural conventions, food, places of worship, familiar objects and social surroundings; and climate changes. In other words, immigrants not only mourn people and places but also culture itself. The “cultural mourning” (Ainslie, 1998) leads to a variety of strategies to repair the sense of loss, to deny it, or to otherwise attenuate it. Most psychoanalytic theorists agree that these mourning processes are a critical part of the immigrant experience, and they play an important role in what Akhtar (1995) has termed immigrants’ “third individuation” as immigrants seek to integrate or consolidate the experiences of loss and change. It also forms an essential part in the massive transformation in their identities. The losses are likely to be accompanied by shifts in status and affiliation that can be highly disorganizing to one’s sense of identity and belonging as immigrants engage in a process of cultural adjustment. When faced with the challenge of adapting new set of rules, standards, and social roles in the new country, an immigrant often experiences what Mendlovic, Doron, Ratzoni, and Braham (2001) has termed ‘immigration-induced anomie,’ generating dilemmas about reshaping one’s norms in order to integrate to mainstream society. Inherent in these dilemmas is a central conflict of how to mourn lost objects without losing the connection to one’s past (Marlin, 1994).

The process of mourning integral to the experience of immigration invariably involves personal transformation and a reshaping of the internal world of self. Antokoletz (1994) argues that what she terms cross-cultural journeys “precipitate [a] developmental crisis. They involve the person in a struggle toward the integration of new cultural identifications and values with earlier ones transmitted by parents and the native social milieu” (p. 35, italics in the original). In other words, part of what is mourned is the version of the self that was, of necessity, left behind. Akhtar (1999) has delineated four journeys as characterizing the nature of identity transformation in immigration: the transition from love or hate of the country of origin and new country to
ambivalence; from feelings of near or far to *optimal distance* from the country of origin; from past or future to present day; and from separate social affiliations to mutuality and a sense of a ‘we’ identity in the new country. In this framework, the mourning of losses and the working through of traumatic experiences incurred in the immigration process become especially important if an immigrant is to move toward a sense of ‘*autonomy and identity consolidation.*’ A number of studies highlight a complex of emotional and psychological effects of this “working through of traumatic experiences associated with immigration.” Some possible effects of such negotiations include splitting, in which country of origin and adoptive country are idealized and devalued alternately; ethnocentric withdrawal, in which the immigrants affiliate almost exclusively with others and the traditions within their own cultural group; counterphobic assimilation, in which immigrants develop an ‘as-if’ (Deutsch, 1965) identity as they rapidly identify with the adoptive culture; and nostalgia, which can contribute to depressive states and isolation (Marlin, 1994; Akhtar, 1999). It can be argued that in the bulk of the psychoanalytic literature, nostalgia, through its equation as mourning for various actual and imagined losses, is primarily presented negatively as a pathology or psychological disorder. The same can even be traced back to the canonical medical text of 1688 by Johannes Hofer who first coined the term ‘nostalgia’². Contrary to this, in recent literature, the experience of nostalgia has been complicated by theorizing it as holding “positive” potential by privileging its role in identity formation, both at the individual as well as the group level. Laubscher (2012) points out that although the literature often qualifies nostalgia as “sentimental,” or mostly “sorrowful,” “regretful,” or “melancholic,” it is also seen as a “positively toned” experience, one that is

²Casting the experience of nostalgia as an ailment, Hofer believed that it was possible “from the force of the sound nostalgia to define the sad mood originating from the desire for return to one’s native land.”
“almost never infused with those sentiments we commonly think of as negative—for example, unhappiness, frustration, despair, hate, shame, and abuse” (p. 216). Additionally complicating the concept of nostalgia is the notion presented by Boym (2007) that there is not one “nostalgia” but that nostalgia itself is of a certain kind. She distinguishes between two types of nostalgia—“restorative” and “reflective.” Restorative nostalgia stresses “nostos (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home, thus focusing on the past. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, thrives on algia (the longing itself), privileging loss and the irrevocable suffering resulting from it” (p.13).

It can be observed that in the bulk of the psychoanalytic literature nostalgia is often conceptualized as mourning for the traumatic loss of country of origin and the focus on how one copes or fails to cope with the loss primarily associated with immigration. The experience of trauma before and after immigration further contributes to depressive symptoms and social isolation (Boulanger, 2004; Paris, 2008; Vega et al, 1991).

**Loss, Mourning, and Role of Language**

Ainsle, Harlem, Tummala-Narra, Barbanel, and Ruth (2013) consider the central role of language in relation to an immigrant’s experience of loss and mourning. They highlight the impact of learning a new language and loss of one’s native language or mother tongue for an immigrant whose native language differs from that of the host country:

For the immigrant whose native language differs from that of the new culture, every effort to communicate is taxing and feels, subjectively, as if it were a reminder of one’s imperfection, creating disequilibrium in self-structures and narcissistic wounds. Immigrants often experience a disparity between their actual talents and capacities and what they are able to communicate in a second language. Thus, losing the utility of one’s
mother tongue is experienced as loss, given the ways in which language is deeply woven into our psychological structure in overt and subtle ways (p. 669-670).

They further argue that psychoanalytic literature on the immigration experience has long recognized how the loss of the capacity of one’s native language to function as a fundamental mechanism to organize the self and provide it with a sense of vitality and esteem forms an important part of the mourning process for the immigrant (see also Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Along similar lines, Mirsky (1991) notes:

The loss of the mother tongue in immigration is accompanied by a deep sense of loss of self-identity and of internal objects. Learning a new language involves an internalization of new object and self-representations and reactivates the internal process of separation (p. 620).

**Imigration, Identity, and the Role of Fantasy**

The psychoanalytic literature on immigration also emphasizes the role of fantasy in working through the identity transformation involved in the process of immigration. For example, fantasies about the home country can provide a means of coping with the losses that accompany immigration (Ainslie, 1998). Parallel to the role of nostalgia which may serve to recapture the component of an immigrant’s life in the home country and temporarily reunite one with the past in fantasy, is the process of ‘refueling.’ Refueling occurs when an immigrant maintains ties to his or her cultural community and reconnects with the home country through visits, phone calls and emails, online chats, and other social media such as Facebook (Akhtar, 1999). Refueling creates a transitional space that is necessary for ‘creative engagement’ with separation and loss (Ainslie, 1998, p. 290) as well as the ability to face the challenges of an unfamiliar cultural environment and subsequently negotiate a new identity.
Psychoanalytic perspectives on mourning and nostalgia note the importance of the real and imagined return home for immigrants. Tummala-Narra (2009), in her study of therapeutic case-examples of immigrant patients she worked with, argues that immigrants negotiate the concept of home in multiple ways, including actual visits to the country and recreating in the adoptive land aspects of the country of origin. In her work with these patients, she discovered that fantasies of home as constructed in interpersonal and relational contexts lie at the heart of immigrants’ visit home. A complex and dynamic interplay of these fantasies of home and actual visits influence an immigrant’s ability to mourn various kinds of losses commonly associated with immigration. She highlights how her immigrant patients experience feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression, guilt, and ambivalence during the process of mourning. She argues that the role of fantasy and imagination involving home is heightened in the face of such losses and intense feelings. While emphasizing the adaptive aspects of the actual return home of immigrants’ actual visits to their home country in her discussions, she demonstrates “how an immigrant’s visit to her home can preserve a sense of continuity and connection with the past and present cultural contexts that foster psychological adjustment” (Tummala-Nara, 2009, p. 243).

In contrast to the literature on acculturation and effects of acculturative stress on mental well-being which functions within a highly reductive, objectifying, and ahistorical framework, the psychoanalytic literature brings to bear its classical concepts of loss, trauma, mourning, and fantasy on the understanding of experiences of immigration. In doing so, it partially succeeds in presenting a complex and fluid understanding of cultural adjustment carried out by immigrants, the negotiated nature of their identity formation, and lived experiences of ‘home.’ For example, immigrants use nostalgia in order to not only mourn the loss of real home but also to establish
and maintain a sense of home and community in the host country. Similarly, how immigrants maintain multiple notions of home is demonstrated by their use of imagined or fantasized return home. These fantasies, along with nostalgia for home, play a significant role in allowing the immigrant to perform multiple, hyphenated identities. The psychoanalytic studies emphasize the loss of language frequently entailed in immigration and imperative to adopt the host country’s language as a fundamental mechanism to organize the self and identity and not simply as another variable of the acculturative process.

On the other hand, in presenting immigrant experiences in terms of ‘immigrant-induced anomie,’ ‘strategies to repair loss,’ ‘integration or consolidation of experiences of loss and change,’ and ‘four journeys’ which include “working through trauma of loss” and finally “to move toward a sense of ‘autonomy and identity consolidation’” (Akhtar, 1999) strongly echoes the “better adjusted”/ “maladjusted” dichotomy and the underlying assumptions similar to majority of empirical acculturation studies, namely, integration or consolidation being an end goal of an immigrant’s acculturation without explaining the process by which such an end goal would be achieved. Furthermore, it tends to ignore context and issues of power, placing the responsibility for acculturation foursquare in an internal, and individual domain.

**Alternative Research on Acculturation and Migration**

A smaller number of scholars of migration have presented more complex and non-linear theories of assimilation and acculturation by incorporating ideas such as boundary crossings, race, and transnational migration. A significant focus of these studies is the emphasis on highlighting individual and collective choices that immigrants make when constructing meanings about their ethnicity (Alba & Nee, 1997, 2003; Barkan 1995; Gans, 1992). Other examples of alternative theories of acculturation proposed by scholars specifically focus on aspects of
transnational migration and rely on concepts such as “segmented assimilation” (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997), “transnational communities” (Portes, 1996), “transnational social fields” (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1995), “transnational villager” (Levitt, 2001), “transnational attachments” (Rumbaut, 2002), “transnational life” (Smith, 2000), and “assimilation without accommodation” (Gibson, 1988). The “segmented assimilation” theory offers a theoretical framework for understanding the process by which the new second generation, the children of contemporary immigrants, becomes incorporated into the system of stratification in the host society and the different outcomes of this process. Portes and Zhou (1993) have observed three possible multidirectional patterns of adaptation most likely to occur among contemporary immigrants and their offspring: “One of them replicates the time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight into the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity” (p. 82). These scholars refer to the divergent destinies from these distinct patterns of adaptation as "segmented assimilation" (Zhou, 1997). This theory takes into account a range of individual and contextual factors, such as education, ability to speak English, age of immigration, racial status and family socio-economic background, while attempting to determine into which segment of American society a particular immigrant group may assimilate.

The concept of “transnationalism” forms the basis for theories of migration such as “transnational communities,” “transnational social fields,” and “transnational life.” Portes (1996) and Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton (1995) tie migration and the emergence of “transnational communities” and “transnational social fields” to the rise and spread of global
capitalism and the interests and needs of investors and employers in the advanced countries. Emphasizing the dynamics of globalization, they define “transnationalism” as:

the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders…. An essential element is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies (p.6).

All these terms refer to the ways in which the experiences of the new first- and second-generation immigrants are shaped by the back- and- forth movement between multiple homes and societies, communication between the home and host cultures via media and technology, discrimination in the host society, and desire of the immigrant communities to preserve their home cultures (Bhatia, 2007). Although these theories acknowledge the validity of pluralist and transnational aspects in the acculturation process of immigrants, they still implicitly retain the relevance of the more “traditional” and universalist assimilation model with acculturation having an “end goal.” Furthermore, the focus of these theories is limited to experiences of recent or new first-and second- generation immigrants captured in a “snap-shot” view rather than a more longitudinal work of identity formation carried out by immigrants over time.

**Hermeneutic Research Focusing on Asian Indian Identity Formation**

A small body of research does exist that makes an attempt to critically investigate the dominant discourses in identity formation and to further complicate notions of Asian Indian identity and work required and carried out by individuals to maintain it. More specifically relevant to the present study, there is a small, but growing body of research being done on the formation of cultural identity in the post-1965, ‘second-wave,’ Asian Indian immigrant
communities in the United States (Bhattacharjee, 1992; Ganguly, 1992; Gibson, 1988; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Khandelwal, 2002; Kumar; 2000; Maira, 2002; Maira & Srikanth, 1996; Prashad 2000; Purkayastha, 2005; Rangaswamy, 2000; Rudrappa, 2004; Shukla, 2003; Visweswaran, 1997) that utilize a ‘both-and,’ in contrast to an ‘either-or,’ orientation to highlight the interplay between race, ethnicity, and identity formation and to examine the complexities, contradictions, and conflicts experienced by Asian Indian immigrants.

Using a combination of ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviews, Gibson (1988) focuses on Sikh high school students in a particular California community to explore the relationship between these immigrant children’s identity formation and high school performance and adjustment. Similarly, Maira (2002) explores the youth culture of South Asian Indians in New York City, using interviews. Although these studies use narrative approaches to explore identity formation in Asian Indian immigrant communities, they combine both first as well as second generation participants and limit the participants to adolescents and young adults. In some studies, researchers utilize an ethnographic approach to illuminate questions of first-generation Asian Indian identity construction and issues of citizenship rights and politics of recognition through an examination of non-governmental organizations that provide various services to this community (Bhattacharjee, 1992; Rudrappa, 2004). Once again, the focus of these studies is broad in nature, encompassing not only larger Asian Indian communities in a particular geographic area (New York city and Chicago respectively), but also combining stories of both first and second generation participants. Another feature of these studies is the centrality of organizations being used as sites of research rather than voices or stories of participants themselves. A sub-group of ethnographic literature comprises essays that combine theory, cultural criticism, significant historical moments, autobiographical material,
photographs, and poetry to generate rich, exploratory themes that highlight complexities of belonging, personhood and identity for first generation Asian Indians in America (Ganguly, 1992; Kumar, 2000; Prashad, 2000; Purkayastha, 2005; Shukla, 2003; Viswesvaran, 1997).

In his ethnographic study, Bhatia (2007), using participant observation and interviews, focuses specifically on racial dynamics of American society and its interaction with the identity formation of first-generation, professional, middle-class Asian Indians living in a northeastern suburb of the United States. More specifically, he highlights how the larger, majority culture uses racial and cultural terms, labels, and categories to define and frame the identity of Indian migrants and how Asian Indians counter these labels of otherness. An oral history approach is used by Khandelwal (2002) in her study of Indian immigrants living in New York City to explore ways in which that community changed and evolved over four decades. She utilizes extensive interviews with participants of both the first and second generation, to highlight relationships between generational differences, gender, class, and religion and identity. In her study of migration, gender, and lived experiences of Asian Indian women, Kumar (2000) uses a life history approach to generate narratives that highlight effects of migration on the lives of Asian Indian women, specifically their experiences of being a woman. Similarly, Rayaprol (1997), using participant-observation methodology to generate narratives, explores how immigrant women’s lives are influenced by religion and religious practices. Although she includes participants of both generations, the focus of the study is specifically on the issues of gender and religion and their interaction with identity construction. Similarly, using first-person accounts of Indian Americans of three different families, Mitra’s (2003) study examines the impact of immigration on their identities in the larger context of the influence of Indian Americans on American suburban life. Bhalla (2006) uses letters to the editors of the expatriate
Indian newspaper *India Abroad* in order to examine the processes of identity formation among Indian immigrants in the United States in the decade of the 1970s.

Adopting a more phenomenological and dialectical framework, Martsin and Mahmoud (2012) characterize the movement away from home—or migration—as a dynamic, dialectical, and developmental experience. In their study they explore the dialectic meaning of “home” and movement away from home. They emphasize “the sense of being at-home and the intertwined sense of identity as interlinked and mutually defining anchors of existence that become inevitably shaken and ruptured in the experience of migration” (pg. 732). Instead of seeing the experience of migration as a unidirectional sequence from rupture to shock, to coping and finally to new stable being, they highlight the inherently complex and dialectic nature of migration.

At the center of their exploration, Märtsin & Mahmoud (2012) conceive of migration experiences as entailing dialectics of home and non-home, rupture and continuity, novelty and everydayness, changing and remaining. Contextualizing the experience of migration in a dialectic mode allow these authors to account for its inherent ambiguity and complexity as it is often recorded in stories of migration experiences shared by people who have left home. Movement away from home thus simultaneously becomes enabling and constraining; enabling the person leaving home to build self-continuity in new environment, yet also holding her/him back and distancing her from novelty. Similarly, migration is experienced as a threat, yet also as a promise; it is a painful, yet possibly exhilarating experience that makes the person leaving home lose their center of security and familiarity, and also open up opportunities for transformation and reinvention.

According to Koshy (1998), “significant amount of research so far has been produced by literary scholars, but much empirical, and ethnographic work in anthropology, sociology, history,
and psychology remains to be done on South Asian American racial identification” (p. 287).

During my literature review, I did not find studies that focused on first or second generation Gujarati Asian Indian ethnic identity. As summarized above, the majority of hermeneutic/interpretive research on first generation Asian Indian identity formation utilizes a variety of methodological approaches that range from ethnography, participant observation, interviews, and life history and is both general and narrow in focus—general in including ‘second wave’ as well as more recent first and second generation Asian Indians from various ethnic subgroups as participants in large urban communities and narrow in examining interaction of identity construction with specific mediating factors such as gender, race, religion, or citizenship issues.

Cross-cultural psychological research that is dominated mainly by empirical method has traditionally been occupied with developing universal, linear, and fixed models and theories of immigrant identity, acculturation, and adaptation. By including the role of trauma, mourning, language, and fantasy, psychoanalytic literature has succeeded in adding a layer of complexity to this majority, empirical research. Missing from this literature is a focus on psychological processes in the transnational movements of migrants as they move between cultures, communities, and languages. Although highly commendable for throwing into sharp relief issues of immigrant identity, this body of cross-cultural research has largely presented migration and identity work carried out by immigrants as a series of fixed phases and stages that do not account for the specific culturally distinct and politically entrenched experiences of immigrants in the U.S..

Scholars of migration that proceed from a hermeneutic stance have presented more complex and non-linear theories of assimilation and acculturation by incorporating ideas such as
boundary crossings, race, and transnational migration. They conceptualize experience of
migration as a back-and-forth movement between multiple homes and societies and utilize a
‘both-and’, in contrast to an ‘either-or’, orientation to highlight the interplay between race,
ethnicity, and identity formation and to examine the complexities, contradictions, and conflicts
experienced by immigrants. A central objective of this study is to generate voices and stories that
illuminate lived experiences of a specific group of first-generation Asian Indians, namely first-
generation Gujarati Asian Indians and thereby address the gap in cultural psychological research
and further contribute to the hermeneutic literature that focuses on the everyday practices and
experiences of immigrant populations.
CHAPTER THREE—METHOD

Conceptual Framework

As is clear from the literature review in Chapter Two, there is a paucity of research in the area of identity construction with first-generation Asian Indians in general and Gujarati immigrants in particular. In addition, the majority of empirical research in psychology that focuses on issues of acculturation and its dynamic interplay with identity and personhood of Asian Indians is inadequate in understanding the highly fluid, polyphonic, culturally and historically situated complexities of the lives of this immigrant population. With this in mind, a need was felt to utilize a method of research that was firmly embedded within a hermeneutic framework—an approach to research that is not limited or content with asking what something is, but concerns itself primarily with how something comes to be or is constituted.

Kumar (2000) points out that the positivist traditions of doing research in psychology have yielded volumes of research that endorses the “scientific method” of objectivity, neutrality and measurement in quantitative terms, many of these methods are designed to reduce the ‘messiness’ and ‘error’ in doing research (p.24). However, if the aim is to study human experience how it is lived (the central objective of this study), then the ‘messiness’ of its contradiction, inconsistencies, fluidity, and ambivalence cannot be reduced or minimized under the constructs of ‘objectivity’ or merely as ‘variable.’ It now becomes possible, using a hermeneutic framework, to posit the aim of this study which is to provide “voices” of immigrant Gujarati Asian Indians articulated in and through their own lived experiences and to present glimpses of their world and identity as constructed and articulated by them.

A primary purpose of hermeneutic inquiry is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness. Human experience is multilayered and complex, and methods
designed to study physical objects are not a good fit for the study of experience. A hermeneutic approach is highly suited to take account of the particular characteristics of human experience and to facilitate the investigation of experience. Experience has a vertical depth, and methods of data gathering, such as short-answer questionnaires with Likert scales that only gather surface information, are inadequate to capture the richness and fullness of an experience. People have access to much of their own experiences, but their experiences are not directly available to public view.

The epistemological position is a philosophical position that allows the researcher to answer questions about how s/he can know and what s/he can know. In other words, it relates to what kinds of things a study can find out. The literature review brought forth some significant problems with mostly positivistic, quantitative studies that treated the Asian Indian immigrants as objects of study and presented their lived experience of migration and its impacts in a reductive, ahistorical context. Drawing attention once more to the scarcity of the literature on the topic and the limited ways of inquiry into this topic, a hermeneutic methodology that promises a more nuanced and fuller account is needed for the voices of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians to be heard and understood. Polkinghorne (2005) argues that the experiential life of people is the area qualitative methods are designed to study, and Schwandt (2001) points out that “qualitative inquiry deals with human lived experience. It is the life-world as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study” (p. 84). Thus, the data gathered for study of experience need to consist of first-person or self-reports of participants’ own experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Within the larger hermeneutic research domain, different approaches and methods are associated with different epistemologies. This study employs a narrative approach in order to
answer the question of what it could find out, i.e., what it could find out about the lived experiences of ‘second-wave’ first-generation Gujarati Asian Indian immigrants in America. Realist epistemology underpins a narrative approach to research which assumes that there is a knowable domain of facts about human experience, and that consciousness can be discovered through the application of certain methods (here, application of narrative interpretations).

Central to the narrative approach are questions of self and identity, and underpinning narrative psychology’s understanding of self are concepts derived from the theoretical perspective of philosophical hermeneutics (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). Schwandt (2003), adopting the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and Taylor, argues that understanding is interpretation and it is not an isolated activity of human beings. It is a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something as something and that is the primordial givenness of our world orientation. In the act of interpreting, socio-historically inherited bias or prejudice is not regarded an attribute that an interpreter must strive to get rid of or manage as it assumes that understanding requires engagement of one’s biases. Moreover, understanding is something that is produced in a dialogue between the interpreter and what s/he is trying to understand. It is not something that is reproduced by an interpreter through an analysis of that which s/he seeks to understand. The meanings one seeks of a social action are temporal and processive and always coming into being in the specific occasion of understanding. In other words, meaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation; it is not simply discovered (emphasis in original, p. 300-304).

Thus, within a narrative approach that is located in the larger hermeneutic/interpretive framework, the basic source and method of understanding and interpreting is narratives or stories. Within this framework, the term narrative is used both as a text and a method. First, it is
employed interchangeably with story to refer to the process of storytelling. It also refers to the product, the story itself. Second, it is used as a method of inquiry, a qualitative research approach that solicits and analyzes personal accounts as stories, and allows participants to use their own words and categories to describe their life experiences (Muller, 1999). It is argued that people order their lives through narrative. Hopes, desires, memories, fantasies, intensions, representations of others and time are all interwoven through narrative into a fabric that people experience—and can tell as a life history (Josselson, 2004). Furthermore, this telling is co-constructed in a dialogic process within ‘webs of interlocutions’ in a ‘defining community’ (Taylor, 1989). According to Frank (1997), the act of writing or talking about one’s experience enables reclaiming of voice and it is in the reclaiming of narrative authority that culturally marginalized groups can find places of empowerment. Lieblich, Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) argue that stories imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world; at the same time, however, they shape and construct the narrator’s personality and reality. The story is one’s identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. People know or discover themselves, and reveal themselves to others, by the stories they tell. Because this study takes the exploration of lived experiences of ‘second wave’ first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians in the U.S. as its central goal, a narrative approach situated within the hermeneutic interpretive framework is considered most suitable and informs the overall methodology for the present research.

For the study, I recruited four participants from the Greater Pittsburgh area. The city of Pittsburgh and surrounding suburbs have a long history of first generation Asian Indian immigrants who have settled here for more than 30 years, although research studies on Asian Indians in the U.S. (both first and second generation) tend to primarily include participants from
cities with larger population concentration of Indians such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Presently, the greater Pittsburgh area is home to more than 3,000 Asian Indian immigrants. Gujaratis form the largest ethnic group within this community with a vibrant and highly active community organization called the ‘Gujarati Samaj of Greater Pittsburgh’ (the Samaj). Identifying as a Gujarati myself, I had become a member of this organization since moving to Pittsburgh to pursue my doctorate. My aunt, one of the ‘second wave’ first-generation Gujarati immigrants to the area herself, introduced me to this community and before long I was regularly participating in various religious and cultural activities organized by the Samaj. Over time some members of the Gujarati Jain community also became my friends and I was occasionally invited to their homes for family celebrations, lunches, afternoon tea, and even family ‘game night.’

As I became part of the Gujarati community of Pittsburgh through various Samaj activities, there were numerous occasions when many first generation members asked me about my journey to the United States and in turn, shared their experiences with me. These conversations lingered on my mind long after they were over and resurfaced when I was contemplating participant recruitment for this study. Inspired by these conversations, seeking the help of the Samaj in order to recruit participants seemed organic. The organization primarily used e-mail to announce its activities and programs to its members. I obtained permission to send out e-mails to members explaining the goals of the study and confidentiality for recruitment. Similarly, I announced the study and recruitment of participants during one or more of the monthly cultural activities organized by the Samaj. I also put up a flyer of the study at the Indian temple located in Monroeville, PA. Recruitment for the study began following IRB approval from Duquesne University and my dissertation committee.
Sampling/Participant Selection

For the purposes of this study, purposeful, criterion-based sampling for data collection was utilized. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling is the process of selecting information rich cases that deal with issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). The criteria for this study included male and female participants born and raised in India; who immigrated to the United States as part of the second wave of immigration of Indians between 1966 and 1980 and who identified themselves as ‘Gujaratis’.

The sample size for the study was determined by following the suggestions offered by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) who assert that the number of participants necessary is inversely proportional to the intensiveness of the study. Relatively few deep, long intensive interviews observed in highly detailed, multilayered ways yield about as much material as many shorter, less intensive texts. While interviewing the participants, I had simultaneously started to re-listen to already completed interviews and to read personal notes I had taken immediately following each interview. This process alerted me to the detail and complexity in each narrative, even upon a first and initial relistening. The next step was transcribing the interviews verbatim and reading each of them multiple times. Once again, throughout the transcription and reading of the transcribed interview process, I observed how each participant had spent considerable time and effort to construct and present their story of migration and selfhood in a rich, multilayered manner, containing a dynamic interplay of plot structure, turning points, ruptures, and revisions and reworkings of significant events and experiences so as to inter-weave themes of loss, home, and identity in a highly complex, yet fluid way. I had carried
out four of these interviews at this time—two female and two male participants. I weighed the
need for further interviewing with more participants in the context of the depth, intensity,
complexity, and richness of the interviews I had already completed. From this contemplation
emerged a dilemma—on the one hand, I could continue interviewing more participants which
would generate not only more narratives, but also findings which would enable me to present a
more nuanced, complex, and maybe even a different story of migration and identity of first-
generation Asian Indians than the one I was beginning to observe and construct from the four
interviews. On the other hand, I was confronted with a deep sense of responsibility, as a
researcher, member of the Pittsburgh Gujarati Jain community, and as a Gujarati, Jain migrant to
the United States myself (in other words, by my own highly fluid position as an insider and an
outsider throughout this research study) to do justice to the stories I was already offered by those
four participants. Practically, this responsibility entailed that I made every effort to present a
story (story of this research through its findings) that, at the minimum, conveyed the same
intensity, richness, complexity, and fluidity that each participant’s story presented. Then, there
was the scope of this study itself to consider. In the end, the responsibility to my participants
guided me to one possible way of facing and resolving the dilemma—I decided to stop
sampling/data collection with four interviews (participants).

A number of participants contacted me via phone and e-mail and I screened them to
ensure that they met the criteria of the study. Once I had identified a number of participants that
met the criteria, I scheduled interviews. All four participants ultimately recruited for the study
initially contacted me via phone. Upon inquiry, two female participants informed me that they
had found out about the study from my aunt while the two male participants had become aware
of it through word of mouth from other Samaj members. When I first spoke with each participant
over the phone, I introduced myself, described briefly the nature of my study, what I was asking for in terms of time and effort, and participant criteria. Below, participants are referred to by pseudonyms. I invited each participant to choose her or his pseudonyms.

Participant Demographics

Participant One: Jigna

At the time of the interview, Jigna was a 69-year old married, Gujarati, Indian American female (self-identified). She came to the United States in 1968 from Mumbai when her husband, who was already in the U.S. at the time, called her to join him to “settle and start a family.” Jigna had earned a bachelor’s degree in arts in India. She described herself as a “housewife” and a “mother”. She spoke mostly in Gujarati with me during the interview. A leading organizer of, and participant in various activities and charities of the Gujarati Samaj and a Hindi music aficionado, Jigna has been in the United States for the past forty five years.

Participant Two: Pradina

At the time of the interview, Pradina was a 74-year old married Gujarati, Indian American female (self-identified). She obtained a bachelor’s degree in economics while in India and followed her physician husband to the United States from Baroda, a city in the state of Gujarat, in 1968. When asked, she described herself as a “housemaker.” She worked as a librarian for a brief amount of time after coming to the U.S. Citing reading as her “passion”, Pradina enjoys reading books on Jain religion and spending time with her grandchildren. She used both Gujarati and English while speaking with me during the interview. She has now resided in the United States for the past forty five years.
Participant Three: Vijay

At the time of the interview, Vijay was a 68-year old married Gujarati Indian American male (self-identified). He obtained a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from India and came to the United States from Mumbai in 1969 to work. After “dropping out” of a master’s degree in industrial engineering when he “found a really nice job”, Vijay worked for an international company located in the area as an engineer for forty two years before retiring. He spoke mostly in English during the interview with me. Presently enjoying his time with his family and in traveling, Suresh has been in the United States for the past forty two years.

Participant Four: Mahesh

At the time of the study, Mahesh was a 72-year old married, Gujarati, Indian American male (self-identified). He came to the United States in 1966 from Mumbai to pursue graduate studies in engineering and ultimately earned a master’s degree in mechanical engineering. He worked for a local steel mining corporation for 36 years before retiring. He now enjoys his free time with his wife and two sons and “watching Hindi movies from home on TV.” During the interview he spoke mostly in English with me, interspersing it occasionally with Gujarati. He has now resided in the United States for the past forty seven years.

Method of Data Collection

For the present study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were utilized as a method of data collection because it was the most suitable method for generating complex, layered, life narratives. According to Johnson (2001):

A researcher who uses in-depth interviewing commonly seeks “deep” information and knowledge—usually deeper information and knowledge than is sought in surveys, informal interviewing, or focus groups, for example. This information usually concerns
very personal matters, such as an individual’s self, lived experiences, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge, or perspective (p. 104).

In-depth, “deep” interviewing is especially suited as a method of data collection for the present study as it allows a researcher to enter participants’ lived worlds such that they are able to gain the “deep understandings” that they have of their own life space, their everyday cultural activities, routines, events, and places. Interviews also aim to understand the folk theories and the mythic, casual, or scientific explanations and perceptions that participants invoke in order to understand their way of life. Most importantly to this study, in-depth interviews produce deep understandings of how participants’ sense of selves and identity are constructed, articulated, and tied to the particular language that they use to frame meanings of culture (Johnson, 2001).

With the additional hope to gather rich and nuanced narratives of participants’ experience, I encouraged them to share, include, and/or utilize family portraits, photo-albums, memorabilia, or artifacts as part of the interview. Each interview lasted between sixty to ninety minutes.

**Interview**

I began each interview by giving the participant a consent form detailing the purpose of the research, the duration of their participation, how I planned to maintain confidentiality, and the risks or benefits of participating in the research. I offered each participant time to process all the information concerning the study, their rights to confidentiality, and the importance of informed consent. When further invited to discuss any questions or concerns, each of the participant declined. I also discussed with the participants how the interviews would be audio taped, transcribed, and stored in a securely locked cabinet. Once they had given consent, I began audio-taping the interview.
Each participant in the study was first asked a set of standard biographical questions that require short, structured, direct answers. These questions helped to obtain information regarding participants’ age, sex, number of years of education, marital status, immigration status in the U.S., number of immediate family members, employment status, and socioeconomic background. Next, I asked each participant a set of “grand tour” questions. According to Spardely (1979) and Werner and Schoepfle (1987), ‘grand tour’ questions seek to elicit understanding, feelings, key terms, and major features or attributes about people, acts, time, goals, expectations, motivations, and experiences (as cited in Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 97). I used these open-ended ‘grand tour’ questions as an approximate guide to navigate the interview and as invitations to participants to further deepen their narratives.

Following were the “grand tour” questions I asked participants during the interview:

1. Tell me your story of coming to America from India.
2. What has it meant and continues to mean to you to be an Indian in America, including a Gujarati in America? How has it changed since you first came to the U.S.?
3. How has being an Indian in America changed your life? If you were to describe yourself before and after you came to the U.S., how would you do it?
4. If you were trying to convey to somebody what it feels to be a Gujarati-Indian in America, how would you try to do it? How would you go about describing it?
5. What does being a first-generation, Gujarati-Indian living in the U.S. mean to you?
6. How do you see yourself in relationship to other ethnic communities (white, African-Americans, other Asian communities, Hispanics) in the U.S. and how does it impact your own identity as a Gujarati and Indian?
In addition to the grand tour questions, a number of “category questions” were also utilized as probes. Category questions simply seek elaboration and/or clarification of all parts, settings, relationships, activities, and relative worth or value of the domain being discussed (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 98). Following is a list of some category questions that I used during interviews:

1. **Before the Journey:** From what part of India did you come? When did you immigrate and why? What were the attractions/advantages and challenges in the process of arriving to the United States as a first-generation immigrant starting in India? How did you prepare (personal, psychological, familial, social, economic etc.) for the immigration to the United States?

2. **Early experiences:** Did you speak English? What was the racial and ethnic composition of the community in which you first settled? Were there any other Indian/Gujarati families and did you socialize with them?

3. **Education/Occupation:** Did you pursue higher education here in the U.S.? Tell me about your occupation and how you got started?

4. **Family:** Did you meet your partner/wife/husband here in the U.S. or in India? Did s/he come with you to the U.S.? Do you have children, how many and tell me about your experience of raising your children in the U.S.?

5. **Language:** What languages do you speak? Did you speak English when you came to the U.S.? What language do you speak at home, work and other social settings?

6. **Relationship to India:** Do you have family in India? Do you visit India? How often? Tell me about your experience of visiting India and how that has changed since your first arrival in the U.S.
Role of Language and Translation in the Study

During interviews, participants in the study either used Gujarati, their native language, or seamlessly moved in and out of a combination of English and Gujarati. This was equally true for me while talking with them as I am not only a native speaker of Gujarati but also because it felt like an implicit invitation by the participant to me to join her or him in the ongoing construction of the narrative they were weaving. As the prior discussion on identity suggests, it is constructed and transformed not only by an individual’s location in history, politics, culture, and geography, but also language. Through the use of their native language, the participants actively engaged in constructing their experience and ultimately the social world. Therefore, it was important that participants used their native language of Gujarati whenever needed and chosen in order to create more complex and rich narratives.

Since I transcribed and later translated the interviews from Gujarati to English, it is important here to clarify epistemologically my views about translation and ‘researcher as translator,’ based as they are on an interpretive stance. I understand that the translation forms part of the process of knowledge production and there is no neutral position from which to translate. I am also aware of the power relationship within the research where participants use a different language from that of the researcher and the dominant culture to create their reality (Temple & Young, 2004). For example, during the process of translation, I actively made choices about using certain words over others and most importantly, the final research, in the form of this dissertation, is written in English. This position also means that there is no single correct translation of a text (unlike an objectivist or positivist position for translation).

Personally, I am a native Gujarati speaker as I grew up in a family where the spoken language at home was Gujarati. Furthermore, I have also been formally trained in written
Gujarati as I went to a school where the medium of instruction was Gujarati for my primary education (G-12). I became multilingual when I learnt English in addition to other Indian languages, such as, Hindi and Marathi. Presently, I continue to be Gujarati/English bilingual.

I use Gujarati to speak to my family and other Gujarati Asian Indians in the U.S. I also read Gujarati literature during my free time, along with listening to Gujarati music from India. From the time that this study was conceived, I was keenly aware that my familiarity with the native language of my participants was likely to present dilemmas for my dual role of ‘researcher as translator.’ For example, all four participants used the Gujarati word ‘sanskar’ in uniquely Gujarati, yet significant sense and meaning-making ways during their stories. During the interviews and while reading the narrative several times, it became clear to me that it functioned as a pivot around which participants tried to understand, construct, and to communicate important experiences of their journey of migration, such as, raising children as first-generation Gujarati, Jain, and Indian parents and more importantly, their efforts to grapple with question of identity and selfhood.

But I had particular difficulty in translating this word from Gujarati to English. Consider Jigna, talking in Gujarati, about how she perceives herself and her identity:

कેમકે મારો જનમ ભારતમાં થયો છે એ અટે હાં ભારતીય, પણ ભાષાથી અને સાંસકારથી તો હાં ગુજરાતીજ.")

As a native speaker of Gujarati and in the context of a conversation between two Indian, Gujarati, Jain women (Jigna and me), the meaning of the word ‘sanskar’ was completely clear to me but may not to English speakers/readers. A literal translation for an English reader would be as follows:
"Because I am born in India I am an Indian, but through language and traditions, religion, morals, and values I am a Gujarati."

In order to do justice to the complex way in which Jigna uses the Gujarati word ‘sanskar’ and there not being a single word that conveys this context and complexity of meaning of it in English, I was left with substituting multiple English words such as ‘traditions,’ ‘morals,’ and ‘values,’ although Jigna never ‘really’ used these words. While substituting these words for ‘sanskar’ offers comprehensibility to an English reader, what gets lost in translation is the relational dynamic of the assumed shared meaning and understanding of what certain phrases or choices of words refer to—that is, a shared cultural world that Jigna and I both assumed we live in. I was faced with a choice between using the literal English translation and using the Gujarati word itself. In the end, I decided to use the word ‘sanskar’ as it enabled the unique voice of my participants to come through while alerting the English reader to the complex, fluid, and polyphonic ways in which they grappled with multiple aspects of their lives and meaning of selfhood.

On the one hand, as a researcher who could speak, write, and read Gujarati, I used the experience of translating to discuss the points in the text where I had to stop and think about meaning. Similarly, I used the process of translation as a check on validity of interpretation. On the other hand, my ‘researcher as translator’ role was also inextricably bound to my socio-cultural position and mediated at every stage of transcribing and translating.

**Data Analysis**

Since the aim of this study was to explore the stories of ‘second wave’ first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians’ experience of immigration to the U.S. and the resultant impact it has on identity, an analytic approach proposed by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) to
analyzing stories is utilized. According to this approach, reading, interpreting, and analyzing life stories or narratives can be conducted along the following two dimensions: (a) holistic versus categorical and (b) content versus form (emphasis as in original; p. 12). In the first dimension, a holistic approach takes the life story of a person as a whole, and sections of the text are interpreted in the context of other parts of the narrative. In contrast, when working from a categorical perspective, the original story is dissected, and sections or single words belonging to pre-defined categories are collected from the entire story. The holistic approach is preferred when the person as a whole, that is, her or his development to the current position, is what the study aims to explore (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Thus, the current study adopted the holistic approach given its goals.

The second dimension refers to the distinction between the content and the form of a story. According to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998), analysis can be conducted on the explicit content of an account from the teller’s point of view, or on implicit content by asking about the meaning that the story, or certain sections of it, convey (p.12). On the other hand, analysis can be done on the structure of the plot, the sequencing of events, its relation to the time axis, its complexity and coherence, the feelings evoked by the story, the style of the narrative, the choice of metaphors or words and so forth (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 13). Similarly, overall narrative tone (for example, optimistic and pessimistic) and imagery such as metaphors can also be used for analysis (Lyons & Coyle, 2007, p. 140). Both content and form of the narratives were of interest in the current study. Given the goals of the current study, the following analytic strategies were adopted.
Holistic-Content Analysis of Narratives

This type of analysis was adopted in order to address the following specific research question: ‘What are some of the personal meanings that participants derive from their experience of immigration?’ During the holistic-content analysis of the interviews, I considered the entire story and focused on its content. I read each interview several times until I began to observe a pattern, usually in the form of foci of the entire story. I noted down my initial and global impressions while reading each interview which included exceptions to the general impression as well as the unusual features of the story that caught my attention. Through multiple readings of the story from beginning to end, attention to metaphors that participants used, and the amount of space devoted to discuss a particular topic, special foci of content or themes were decided (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 62). For example, I found the theme of notion/s of ‘home’ as real and as imagined for all four participants. After multiple readings of Jigna’s narrative, I noted a central theme—navigating, maintaining, and transmitting “Indian values” to her children and her identity making process. Another example pertains to narratives of both Vijay and Mahesh, who highlighted how they made sense of their decision to immigrate to the U.S. and challenges encountered during the ultimate adjustment here as a ‘choice.’

Holistic-Form Analysis of Narratives

Holistic-form analysis also looks at the entire story or narrative but the focus is on the formal aspects, rather than the narrative’s content. This form of analysis is particularly useful in understanding how participants construct their identity in the narrative. Its clearest expression is found when the plots or structures of complete narratives are looked at or analyzed. According to Gergen and Gergen (as cited in Lieblich, Tuval- Mashiach, & Zilber,1998), every story, whether
oral or written, can be formally characterized by the progression of its plot, which can be
discerned by “plot analysis” (p. 65). I carried out “plot analysis” of each interview/story which
involved an examination of its structure, plot, and important turning points that shed light on the
entire narrative. The examination of the turning points in each of the interview/story also
illuminated the process of continual adaptation of new identities and consequently constantly
fluid and constructed nature of identities. For example, each participant identified getting their
green card and ultimately U.S. citizenship as a turning point, along with the birth of their
children in the U.S. The plot structure of Mahesh and Pradina revealed how they built their
stories so as to present and identify themselves “first and foremost as Gujarati.”

**Analysis across All Four Narratives**

The final step in the analysis involved a reading across all four narratives, for both
content and form, so as to identify and present themes common to all four of them. The analysis
also comprised analyzing already identified themes for content and form to highlight similarities
and contrasts.

I carried out holistic analysis of content across all four narratives after identifying themes
for each narrative separately. This process of analysis involved re-reading the narratives back to
back, followed by identifying commonalities of themes across them. For example, I had
observed that each participant had devoted considerable space in their narrative to present and
construct multiple meanings and feelings of ‘being at home.’ When compared across all four
narratives, I noticed that being and feelings of ‘home’ involved a relational, dialogic, and
dialectic meaning-making process for all four participants where by rupture and continuity,
novelty and everydayness, changing and remaining characterized everyday lived experience of
‘home.’ Similarly, a cross-comparison of experiences of identity construction for all four
narratives highlighted the expansion of dialectic of home by participants to explore how it shaped and maintained their sense of identity and was intertwined with it. When the theme of ‘otherness’ emerged separately for each participant, a comparison of this theme across all four narratives illuminated how assignation of generic and marked otherness, race, and ethnicity mediated participants’ sense of self, at times restricting while at other times, empowering them to inhabit multiple, polyphonic identities.

When the plot structures of four narratives were compared, a common structure, comprising of stages such as before and preparing for the journey, early years of challenges, journey of making home/finding job and journey of building family and community, emerged. This cross analysis of form across all four narratives also highlighted the common plot progression (movement of plot) across them such as whether all four plots steadily progressed (progressive movement of the story) or stayed relatively stable.

**Reflexivity**

Narrative research shares with other hermeneutic research approaches its assumption that the material used in any kind of analysis is deeply influenced by the researcher. Rather than collecting ‘neutral data’, the narrative psychological researcher frames the question, picks the participants and interacts with them to produce data that are then used for analysis. Further processes of selection and interpretation shape the conclusions and presentation of the analysis (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). This raises the question of ‘representativeness.’ Riessman (2002) argues that all forms of representations of experience are limited portraits—we are interpreting and creating texts at every juncture, letting symbols stand for or take the place of primary experience, to which we have no direct access. Meaning is ambiguous because it arises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst, and reader. Meaning is
fluid and contextual and the idea of representation brings into view the constructed nature of narrative research (Riessman, 2002). Thus, the representation of participants at every stage of this study (area of research, sampling, data collection, analysis, and writing) reflect my own historical, geographical, culture, and linguistic background. As the opening vignette illustrates, the very interest in the immigration experiences of Gujarati Indian Americans was motivated by my personal interaction with a close family member.

My own recent history is of transnational migration from India as a Gujarati. My educational, socio-economic, cultural, and religious background that allowed me to come to the U.S. to pursue further education shares a lot in common with the first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians’ history of immigration, and consequently opened up doors of entering their world in a unique way. In many ways it likely accorded me an ‘insider’ position as a researcher. At the same time, as stated earlier, each generation’s immigration experience is different. My own emotions, desires, dreams, longing and nostalgia about being an Indian, a Gujarati, and an Indian in America along with notions of ‘home’ across time and place probably also influenced my witnessing and interpretation of participants’ stories and construction of identities. For example, the historical, political, and cultural context of the 60s and 70s India, when all four participants came to the U.S., and America at that time influenced the notion of ‘home’ and ethnic identity of my participants compared to my historical, political, and cultural context of the late 20th and early 21st century India and America. Similarly, my ideological and intellectual moorings, including the location and position of the academic made a difference to the manner in which I viewed my participants and their construction and experience of identity. This, in many ways, accorded me the position of an ‘outsider’. Thus, I was constantly called upon not only to straddle
the privileged insider/outsider position as a researcher during every stage of the study but also to reflect upon these positions’ influence on my participant and their stories.

**Procedures of Verification for the Current Study**

The considerations regarding representativeness and positioning highlighted in the previous section also have implications for the way in which qualitative researchers validate their analyses. Validity deals with the questions such as ‘on what basis do I claim that my analysis is correct?’, ‘How do I make claims for the authority of my account?’ In narrative research, the concept of validity generally means being ‘well grounded and supportable’ (Polkinghorne as cited in Lyons & Coyle, 2007, p. 143). Riessman (2002) argues that “Trustworthiness”, not “truth”, is a key semantic difference in the process of narrative analysis. The “truth” assumes an objective reality, whereas “trustworthiness” moves the process into the social world (p. 258). I used some of the following ways in approaching validation for this study:

The traditional criteria for evaluation or verification of data analysis are reliability and validity. These criteria are mainly quantitative, expressed in coefficients of correlation or similar measures, and typically require large data sets. While some scholars believe that the same should apply for all research, including narrative (or qualitative research), this is difficult to implement given the nature of narrative data (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed alternative terms that, they contend, adhere more to naturalistic or qualitative axioms and inquiry. They use the terms “credibility”, “dependability”, and “confirmability” as the equivalents for validity and reliability (p. 300).

**Credibility**

It can be defined as a process of verification whereby one can establish confidence in the “truth value” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects with which and the context in
which the inquiry was carried out (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three approaches were utilized to ensure credibility for this study, first of which is described by Lincoln & Guba (1985) as “prolonged engagement”. This requires the researcher to be aware of likely distortions by being familiar with her or his own personal distortions and those that might be induced, either unintentionally or intentionally by respondents. The personal distortions for the present study that were significant have been articulated in the previous section on researcher as translator and ‘reflexivity.’

In order to achieve prolonged engagement for the current study, sufficient time was spent during the interview stage of data collection for the elicitation of relevant information. Similarly, during the entire data collection and data analysis process, for example immediately after an interview ended, I noted my personal thoughts, feelings, images, and reflections that were evoked.

The second method of achieving credibility utilized for the study consisted of “persistent observation”. The purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail. This can be achieved by continuously engaging in tentative labeling of what are taken as salient factors and then exploring them in detail, to the point where either the initial assessment is seen to be erroneous, or the factors are understood in a non-superficial way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the data collection stage, including while conducting interviews with participants, I relied on probing, category questions to achieve “persistent observation”. Noting down words in the margin that participants used frequently, such as ‘home,’ ‘food’, and ‘language’ in the midst of interviewing participant also allowed me to
identify and label themes and elements that needed further conversation and investigation with participants.

Finally, “member checks” were utilized to ensure credibility. It is a method whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the current study, a brief sketch of the themes and patterns generated after the analysis were provided to each participant in order to obtain their feedback and any clarification or elaboration.

**Dependability**

It can be defined as a process of verification whereby one can determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects in the same (or similar) context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter. If it is possible using the techniques to show that a study has that quality, it ought not be necessary to demonstrate dependability separately (p. 316).

Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ideally separate and more direct techniques must be utilized to ensure dependability of the study, some of the techniques suggested by them are more appropriate for large qualitative studies that comprise bigger sample sizes and therefore large amounts of data. Examples of such techniques include having two separate teams of researchers carry independent inquiry of the data gathered and having the data and process of data collection audited by an independent auditor.
Therefore, for this study, dependability was ensured indirectly through the techniques utilized to establish credibility which include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checks.

**Confirmability**

It can be defined as a process of verification whereby one can establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects and the conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the current study, confirmability was established by cross-checking the final themes, conclusions, and analysis with original verbatim transcription of each interview and the field notes comprising of comments, observations, personal reflections, interview summaries, and suggestion made by the participants themselves following the presentation of initial data analysis to them. Also, confirmability was ensured by formulating the results in such a manner so that they derived completely from the participants’ stories.
CHAPTER FOUR—FINDINGS

In this chapter I discuss the findings of the present study. First, each participant is introduced briefly, followed by a presentation of her or his story of immigration to the U.S. Each story also incorporates discussion of multiple themes. These themes were derived as a result of carrying out holistic analyses of content on the originally transcribed narratives. The story for each participant then concludes with a discussion of the results of holistic analyses of form, once again carried out on the originally transcribed narrative. There is one exception to this general chapter organization: the analysis of form for Vijay’s and Mahesh’s story is presented jointly, due to considerable structural overlap between them. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of themes across all four narratives.

Participant One: Jigna

At the time of the interview, Jigna was a 69-year old married, Gujarati, Indian American female (self-identified). She has lived in the U.S. for the past forty four years. For the interview, Jigna invited me to her home, located about two hours south of Pittsburgh. On a cold, wet December morning when I went for the interview, Jigna’s welcoming smile felt as warm as her living room. One of the first things I noticed as I entered the spacious living room was a huge framed photograph of Jigna’s immediate family, with her husband, two sons, and daughter-in-law, above the fireplace. The room was further scattered with photos of her two sons and other family members. Only later did I realize that they were harbingers of one of the central motifs of Jigna’s story—the importance and struggles of raising a family as a first-generation immigrant parent in the United States. I also found myself admiring various small Indian artifacts and a painting depicting a scene from the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic, in her living room. These and the mild yet familiar fragrance of spices coming from Jigna’s kitchen combined, for a
fleeting moment, to immediately transport me back to my own home in India. Jigna’s anticipation and enthusiasm for participating in the study was palpable as she and I settled on her living room couch to do the interview.

**Before the Journey**

Jigna’s story begins in Mumbai in 1965 when she first met and married her husband, H. Before their marriage, H., who at the time had a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, discussed his wish to come to the United States to pursue “further study” with Jigna. Her initial hesitancy and uncertainty about being married to someone who might travel to a “foreign” country like the United States were assuaged by her parents who pointed out to her that H. was from a “nice family, educated boy… that’s the better thing if he goes there for further studies.” Jigna attempted to understand and make sense of it as an “opportunity to move forward in life…better for everyone. I thought he gonna make it.” At the same time she felt worried about how H. would succeed in a completely unknown country and culture. Jigna and H. were married for nine months before he left for the U.S. to pursue a master’s degree in engineering.

Jigna and her husband had planned that once he would graduate and find a job in the U.S., he would make arrangements for her to join him there. While H. pursued his master’s degree in the U.S., she lived in a “joint family”—a typical Indian living arrangement whereby immediate members of a family, including any elder relatives such as an aunt or an uncle, live together in a house. In addition to her mother-in-law, Jigna’s “joint family” included her brother-in-law and his family. During this time, which lasted for approximately two years, one of the challenges Jigna had to overcome was adjusting to a married life without having her husband by her side to share all the joys and tribulations. Long-distance phone calls to the U.S. being too expensive at that time, her only means of contact with H. during those two years was through
letters. Jigna emphasized how living in a “joint family” with other family members proved particularly helpful in coping with loneliness and worry about H. Family members offered support in traditional yet unusual ways, for example, her mother-in-law, whom Jigna described as “very religious,” kept her occupied by teaching her various religious ceremonies and scriptures, learning to sew, and taking lessons in English. Having her brother-in-law’s young children to look after and care for also helped Jigna to cope with her anxiety about her husband being so far away. She pointed out that her mother-in-law and brother-in-law were able to empathize and identify with her feelings as they too were “missing H. in the same way as I was. Their son and brother, just as my husband, had gone away. They understood.”

**Preparing and Making the Journey**

H. secured a job as an engineer after completing his degree and within six months made financial and legal arrangements for Jigna to join him there as a ‘dependent’ on his H-1B work visa. Jigna began the preparations to go to the U.S. in earnest. Majority of her preparations involved “food stuff” which her mother-in-law and parents helped her prepare. These included all kinds of spices and other dry and cooked food items. The anticipation, excitement, and joy of joining her husband in the U.S. were mixed with tears of sadness for Jigna as she realized that she would be leaving her family behind with no way of knowing when she would be able to see them again. Jigna recalled how the photographs from the U.S., which her husband had sent of his university campus and the town he lived in, filled her imagination of what it would be like. The long, wide roads she had seen in the photos amazed her. Although sad, Jigna clarified that she was not afraid as she “really did not know how things will be. I wasn’t sure what to be afraid of.” It was only when she was finally on the plane that Jigna felt the full impact of her emotions.
These initial stages of Jigna’s story are characterized by her efforts to acknowledge and make sense of a complex set of ambivalent emotions. She tried to balance her feelings of worry, anxiety, and even loneliness with a deep sense of duty to her family and husband. This allowed her to be not only a “good daughter and wife” but also to find courage. If the prospect of, first her husband and then herself, going to the U.S. was full of uncertainty, she could also envision it as a rare “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” for her entire family to prosper. She could now feel anticipation, excitement, and happiness. The sense of ambivalence reappears when Jigna acknowledges feeling sad and crying while leaving her “joint family” behind when leaving for the U.S., as “…when will I see all of them again. I feel great, a lot of gratitude for them and that’s why I feel a little sad that they took care of me just like a family member and I have to now leave them and go.”

Journey Begins in the U.S.: Initial Adjustment and Challenges

Jigna arrived in small town Pennsylvania. At that time H. was renting an apartment there as the town was closer to where he worked. Over the next few years, Jigna and her husband lived in numerous rented apartments in this town before they built their own home in a neighboring town. One of the first things Jigna told me about living in this town was that there were no other Indian families there with the exception of one Indian doctor. She described the first three years in the U.S. as the “most difficult” for her. She felt tremendously lonely, homesick, and missed her family back in Mumbai. She frequently thought of going back “home to Mumbai” and talked about this with her husband. H. tried to encourage her by suggesting that if she continued to feel that way in three months’ time, they would discuss returning back to India and that in the meantime they could “give it their all.” Jigna attributed the difficulty of this period in her journey
to two main challenges, namely, her inability to converse fluently in English and inaccessibility to an Indian grocery store where she could buy Indian groceries.

Jigna clarified that she had learnt English in high school and even took some classes in Mumbai, but English was “never what we used to talk to everyone, day to day.” Jigna struggled with speaking English. The unique American accent made her problem worse. Everyday tasks, such as grocery shopping, conversing with others about what she needed, and taking public transport, became immense challenges for her. She became afraid for the first time as she wondered how she was going to explain herself and “how I gonna handle (everything)?” Although feeling overwhelmed, Jigna improvised by using “gestures and hand actions” to communicate with others. She joined English-speaking classes at the YMCA located in downtown Pittsburgh—initially an impossible-seeming task which involved her travelling alone every week by bus for more than two hours and watching Sesame Street on TV. H. encouraged her by suggesting that she should “just speak, speak, speak…don’t be afraid, right or wrong” with everyone. Jigna realized that “I have to learn and I have to speak.” She started to talk with others at the grocery store, with her neighbors, and even a traffic cop when she was lost. One unexpected advantage of Jigna’s efforts to learn English was meeting other Indian women at the YMCA class and realizing that they shared her experience of difficulty with English and that she was not alone. This, consequently, helped to build her confidence. As she started to communicate with other Americans, her isolation decreased and she came to see them not as “scary,” but as helpful.

**Theme 1: Experience of ‘otherness.’** As Jigna continues to build her story, this stage of her journey stands out for the numerous challenges she faced and overcame. For Jigna, an inability to speak English fluently isolated her and she felt trapped and frustrated. But listening to
her talk about the difficulty with English, I felt that instances in which she struggled to communicate simultaneously marked her as an outsider, a foreigner, an alien, becoming her first experiences of otherness. Not having a basic mastery in speaking English means and feels like not having a place in that language and ultimately in that culture and country—a highly fearful and absolutely overwhelming prospect for a first-generation immigrant like Jigna. If, on the one hand Jigna struggled with becoming fluent in English, on the other hand, her social isolation was making it increasingly difficult to continue to speak in Gujarati (with the exception of her husband)—the native language in which she felt ‘at home’. It is clear that the fear of no longer being able to ‘reside’ or ‘live’ in one’s own language through its everyday use with others in a lived and relational way becomes another experience of otherness,

“It was difficult, because it happens to me all the time. I talk in Gujarati only when I talk to my family, my parents, over the phone. Otherwise, I feel, I am afraid that I will lose my own language…Yes, yes, I feel afraid that I will forget Gujarati.”

The efforts required and deployed to simultaneously navigate the gain of one language while trying to minimize the loss of another exemplified one of many ways in which Jigna began to recognize and make sense of her otherness and even the possibility of living multiple identities as a first-generation immigrant.

For Jigna, unlike her experience with language, when Americans pointed out and commented on her sari, the traditional Indian dress for women in India, it did not feel as if she was being perceived as ‘different’ or as an ‘outsider.’ She explicitly casts these experiences in a positive light by explaining that Americans were “mostly friendly and…nice. They were curious.” Later when she got a job in a sewing factory and was told that she could not wear a sari
at work for safety reasons, Jigna, once again, presented it as a sign and opportunity to adapt to the American culture:

“I just feel that I have to change. Beside, you know (pause) which country I am I have to follow the rules. When I start job, they say you can’t (wear) sari here. I start job in a sawing factory and I did not know so I went for interview I got, I went with sari. It is nice of them that they explain that why I should not wear sari because you have to work on the machines.”

On the other hand, one particular incident stands out for Jigna when she actively and successfully inhabits and utilizes her ‘foreigner’ and ‘outsider’ status, chiefly through being marked as such by her sari and difficulty in speaking English, to navigate with traffic police and get out of paying a parking ticket:

There is one incident that stands out. I was only wearing sari, because I wasn’t feeling very comfortable as I had never wore those kinds of clothes before. I was feeling shy. We went downtown and H. parked the car. He did not put enough money in the meter because we were just going across the road for a short time. But when we came back, we had a ticket, maybe the time got over. So, he (traffic police) left a ticket. Then, H. saw it. The traffic office was right there. So, he told that ‘go to this building, there will be a police station there.’ I became scared. I said, ‘I am not going to the police.’ So, he told me, “Don’t say anything. You don’t have to do anything. If they ask you anything, just say, ‘No English.’” I really did not know about anything here, about any laws here. So, I just did exactly as he (H.) told me. I showed the policeman the ticket. The police said, ‘Oh, you got a ticket’ and he just looked at the ticket and then he said something, but I really did not know or understand what he said, so I said, ‘No English.’ Now, I was
wearing a sari, so maybe he thought that I am a foreigner and he felt that she did not know English. He said, ‘Beautiful sari’ and other things and he tore up the ticket. Since that time, that policeman lived just down from here and whenever he used to see me anywhere he would say, ‘Mrs. S., No English’ (laughs)...I just met him day before yesterday and said ‘hello’.”

Along with the difficulty in communicating in English, Jigna found the lack of an Indian grocery store in her area to be very difficult in that early period. The nearest store was in Pittsburgh, two hours away, and they did not have a car. Not having access to Indian vegetables, flours, spices, and snacks further contributed to Jigna’s sense of isolation and homesickness. She adapted by using locally available vegetables and even by asking for expensive parcels of spices from India. Coincidentally, Jigna and H. met another Bengali man and his family at a local grocery store who not only offered to take them to the Indian store in Pittsburgh whenever he went in his car but also to some India cultural programs in the city. For Jigna, this contact presented an unexpected opportunity to establish her first contact with the larger Guajarati Indian community in the Pittsburgh area. She started to invite other families to her home for social gatherings, thus planting the roots for having a long-standing and rich social life in the U.S. This also enabled her to continue to use her mother tongue, Gujarati, with them. Jigna pointed out that from then on, “I was happy… (felt as if) there is someone there for us in this country. I began to feel less lonely.” Now, she had an avenue to share her immigrant experience in all its diversity with others whom she perceived to be like her—recent, first-time Guajarati immigrant families:

“Yes, most of…50% (share) same experience at that time. With language, discrimination, loneliness, and feeling sad. Also, missing India, missing home. (When I talked with them) I think we were in same boat and we talk sometimes about vegetables stuff, how
what we are getting here, like lettuce, people think that’s cabbage. And we are not getting many vegetable like India. So people have experience with other vegetables and (they share that), this is nice, this is not nice. I felt supported and helped feeling less lonely.” Jigna and H. continued to live in rented apartments for almost nine years. She recounted her first and only experience of discrimination during this time. She described an occasion when a landlord refused not only to show them an apartment for rent but also to open the door. She felt that it was because

“…those things…we are brown skin people (long pause) and we are foreigners. Before that time we felt a lot that it is better to be back in India, when we struggled a lot. You know, we felt that you could get all the help there. We felt that all our people are there and we could have our own support, whereas here people are not even letting us see an apartment.”

By this time, Jigna had her first son. Their difficulty in being able to rent an apartment also had to do with having a small child. Jigna was baffled as she noticed, “Oh, my god. They allow dogs and why not kids? ” When she became pregnant again with her second son, they decided to have their own house. She clarified that by this time she and H. were also able to save enough money to have their own house. They bought a plot of land in a nearby town and moved in a week before her second son was born. With moving into her own house, for Jigna, a long and arduous period of her journey was coming to an end.

The Journey of Making Home

**Theme 2: Feeling ‘at home.’** For Jigna moving into the newly built house with H. and her two sons after almost a decade of her arriving in the U.S. was the first time she began to feel “settled” in the U.S. When she moved into the house, she felt happy and relieved as now there
would never be a landlord who could “kick us out or tell us what we could or could not do.” The house evolved to become Jigna’s home which she felt she could call her own. Over time, she began to feel at home there. She expressed a deep sense of pride in having a home as she pointed out that it had become possible only after living frugally, saving “every penny that we could,” and making sacrifices that involved leaving family and “our home in India for this bright future.” This sense of achievement was a significant reason for her to finally begin to feel at home. One consequence of this was that she thought about India less frequently, especially compared to the first three or four years of her stay in the U.S.:

“Oh, I was so happy. I felt such relief that finally ‘my own house, finally something that we can call our own.’ It began to feel like ‘this is home, our home.’ Once we had this house, I began to feel that in this country and my home. I began to feel that ‘now I am not going to go anywhere.’ The kids were born. We then had their responsibilities, their education. The more these responsibilities and other connections (relationships here) grew, the more this house began to feel like my own home.”

As her story progresses, Jigna complicates this notion of “being and feeling at home.” In addition to a ‘brick and mortar house,’ family, and relationships, she considers how America, as a country, has “welcomed” her and H., provided him and their children with education, numerous opportunities to flourish in ways that she and her family had hoped for even before coming to the U.S., and most importantly, made life comfortable and safe in ways that would have been impossible in India. On the basis of this, “a life was built,” further expanding where and what Jigna experienced as home:

“I think it happened slowly, over the years. I began to realize that ‘now, we have to live here only. There are many opportunities here. There is comfort here and because of the
easy availability of all the necessities we can live here comfortably. So, considering all that I began to feel that ‘I have to live here’…That although we had to live with all those hardships and very frugally in the beginning, but now we can have all these comforts. There is no shortage for anything and we are content, that we were able to provide very good education to our kids. If we would have been in India, we would not have been able to do all this.”

The complexity and fluidity of ‘home’ for Jigna, as a first-generation Gujarati Indian, emerges again when it is mediated by nostalgia for India. Once again, through the lens of relationships she had and continues to maintain with people in India, she contemplates how India is also where she feels at home:

“Due to old age, we don’t go back to India that often any more, but I pine to go (to India), to meet all my relatives, to do the religious pilgrimages and it always feels like home (when I go back to India), as if I have come home. I have left India for all these years, but still I feel that I have come back to India. But then when I live there for 2-3 months and experience some hardship then I feel a bit bored and return back. So, we have forgotten the desire (to return to India permanently) because of all those hardships there. The desire is to meet all the relatives. It has to do with (maintaining) family connections. That is the most important thing in wanting to visit India…I feel like I have come back home. I tend to remember all those old memories. You remember all the things from your childhood, where you lived, where you played with your friends. You recall all those memories. I feel really happy. I like to meet my old friends and reminisce about all memories. I feel happy. When I visit India, I don’t remember the hard times. …If someone asks me now
where my home is I will say ‘America’ because now my feelings of being at home is stronger for here (America).”

**Journey of Building Family and Community**

**Theme 3: Sanskar, community, and identity.** Jigna now focused on raising her sons, their education, and taking responsibility for successfully transmitting and inculcating Indian and, especially, Gujarati and Jain traditions, values, morals, and language to her children. For her, the Gujarati word ‘sanskar’ encapsulates this unique task. She constantly worried about her sons becoming “too Americanized,” which for her primarily meant drinking alcohol and smoking, not focusing on higher education, and not having respect for one’s elders, “too much independence too early.” How to raise her sons, who were simultaneously immersed in and trying to navigate two very different cultures themselves, in a balanced manner without alienating them became a challenge for Jigna. She presented this as the single most important responsibility for first generation Gujarati Indian parents like herself,

“Well…they (first-generation, Gujarati Indian parents) change a little bit, when it comes to things like their children as they grow older, but people of our generation still feel and believe that the maintenance of sanskar is really important. They feel that sanskar has to be preserved and passed on to our children.”

She found novel ways to ensure that her children grew up as Gujarati Jains and Indian. These included teaching them to speak Gujarati at home and answering their questions only in Gujarati even when they talked in English; sending them to Jain Sunday school at the Hindu/Jain temple even though it was two hours away and following Jain rituals of worship at home; cooking and eating only vegetarian, Gujarati food as dictated by the Jain principle of non-violence and discussing its importance with both her sons; and making them aware of the rest of
their family members in India by showing them family photos and ultimately through regular conversations over the phone. Jigna described the period when her eldest son left home for college for the first time as particularly challenging. She and H. constantly worried that instead of focusing on his education at the university, he would “drink and smoke and fall into wrong company of friends.” She feared “losing” her sons. She reflected that ultimately, through a process of continuous negotiations and adaptation with her son, she learnt to develop a balance between trusting and protecting her sons. A recent example of this was her elder son’s decision to marry an American woman instead of an Indian as expected by his parents. This choice by him reignited Jigna’s fear about her son being Americanized and losing “our sanskar.” She felt scared and disappointed not only with her son, but also with herself as if she had somehow failed in being a “good Gujarati, Jain mother.” She felt angry with herself and her son:

 “…take A., when he told us that he has an American girlfriend, we felt little sad. I actually felt very sad. I said, ‘Why couldn’t you find a Gujarati girl, an Indian girl. Does she eat meat, other things?’ I felt angry and started to attack him.”

It appeared as if in her son’s choice to marry a non-Gujarati, non-Indian, American woman, Jigna feared not only for the preservation of Gujarati, Indian values in her second-generation son, but also for all future generations of Gujarati, Jain, Indians in the U.S.,

“…It was me who were really worried that ‘No, if he marries an American, then will she be able to accept our culture?’ We will never be able to accept their culture, their way of life or way of eating, but will she be able to accept or adopt? We wondered how will we accept it…By ‘accepting’ I mean, (pause), if he marries an American, how will we accept her? For starters, language will be a problem. (We wondered) what kind of person she will be. She will eat meat. We just had all these negative thoughts and that we would not
be able to adjust. But then when we thought calmly and we realized that we needed to
adjust and accommodate otherwise we would lose our son forever. At that time we really
felt surprised and sad. H. felt that way more than me. (We thought), ‘Let’s go back to
India.’ I said, ‘We can’t go back like that. We have to be patient and need to think about
it.’ We thought a lot and discussed it and we patiently accommodated and adjusted.”

Jigna also generalize this dilemma to the rest of the first-generation Gujarati community by
recalling similar instances that called upon other parents of her generation to question and adjust
their notions of what it means to be Gujarati Indian and carry that identity through values,

“And I said, ‘We will have to give our consent happily.’ So, we gave our consent and
then he started to bring her here to meet us and we realized that she is a good girl. After
that….but in the beginning, it was difficult. It has been difficult for other parents as well.
But now, more recently, when it is a similar situation (of an Indian son/daughter marrying
an American), the parents accept and just say, ‘It does not matter, whoever he/she is. All
that matters is that they are content. (This is) the biggest adjustment of all (of living here),
the responsibility of settling and marrying your children.”

Charting the journey of how she, with her husband, came to terms with her son’s decision
to marry an American woman also became an occasion for Jigna to reflect on continual demand
placed on her and her sense of self and identity as a result of living in two different cultures. She
realizes that this process of adaptation and navigation is multi-layered, on-going, and fluid as she
reflects that “even after 40 years” she is learning to “adjust to this culture” but still has
significant ambivalence and reservations,

“We are beginning to adjust and accommodate but not about certain things. Their
lifestyle, food habits, ways of dressing…they are really good people, in every way. But
certain things are difficult to accept. Like, meat eating, drinking alcohol and smoking…

These things feel like…don’t belong to our culture.”

In such instances where demands to empathize and “adjust” are made by the second generation, Jigna is also forced to question the way she sees herself. In retrospect she called this “their gift” to her and was able to accept that it was possible for her sons to be “Gujarati, Jain, Indian, and American” simultaneously.

At this stage of her story and journey, Jigna moves from the particular to the general, taking a bird’s eye view of her life in the United States as a first-generation, Gujarati Indian immigrant. She highlights her deep connection with and participation in the Gujarati community as an essential means of maintaining multiple, hyphenated identities of Gujarati, Jain and Indian over the years. She achieves this multiplicity and fluidity of identities by participating in various Indian cultural celebrations and by observing Jain religious festivals and activities with other members of the community. Regular visits to see relatives in Mumbai over the years with her children serve the same purpose. On the other hand, one of the ways in which she participates in the American culture is by celebrating various festivals and holidays, such as having a Christmas tree during Christmas and,

“I also put up different ornaments for other festivals, like for Halloween and a wreath for Thanksgiving. See, since we live in this country, we must make some efforts to adopt this country’s culture as well, whatever you feel is good for you and ignore that which does not suit you. If the neighbors see your decorations, they also feel that even though they are foreigners, they are still celebrating and participating.”
Jigna acknowledges her legal identity of being an American citizen (through citizenship) and feels gratitude and a deep sense of indebtedness towards the U.S. for giving her family all the opportunities and making them prosperous and happy,

“I feel that this country where we have lived for so many years; which has given us citizenship and did not kick us out, but keep us and as a result (we were able to) achieve and do all these things….what if (it) did not allow us to enter (stay) here in the first place? Or if they had let us in, but then created problems for us, then what? So, we must have appreciation for that.”

I feel that throughout her story, Jigna appears to ‘play/toy’ with or juggle both her first-generation, Gujarati, Jain, Indian and American-Indian identities. But ultimately, she returns to utilizing the lens of ‘sanskar’—her Gujarati, Jain, and Indian values, traditions, morals, and language, to reject American identity at the level of her every day, lived experience and to adamantly identify and perceive herself as a Gujarati Jain:

“Well, at that time I did not feel that way about this country. I still thought about our India from time to time. Even now, after all these years, I myself don’t feel that I am an American. I am a Gujarati. I feel that. Even if I am a citizen and this country has an obligation on me. I am thankful for it, but I am a Gujarati and my religion is Jain. I still feel that way. First of all, it is because of our ‘sanskar’, my upbringing, culture, my values. Because of our Gujarati sanskar. Since I have been born in India, Indian is right, but in and through language and sanskar, I am a Gujarati.”

**Holistic Analysis of Form of Jigna’s Narrative**

In terms of content, Jigna’s story is structured around the presence of two dominant axes—relational and encountering and overcoming of challenges. The relational axis is evident
by her framing of objectives first in terms of family and children - the initial stages of Jigna’s story already concedes a description not only of her relationships with her parents and members of her “joint family”, but also how these relationships were central to her sense-making process of all her ambivalent thoughts and feelings. The construction of the story began to occur with and through a reflection on her relationship with others.

The relational, interpersonal axis of Jigna’s story interacts with the other axis, of challenge and obstacle, and is in fact instrumental to its overcoming. This highlights the dynamics of the plot. For example, she presents her efforts to overcome the challenges of language and food also as occasions for establishing long-term social relationships with the larger immigrant Gujarati community in the area. She credits feeling less lonely and homesick to chance encounters with other immigrant Indians and her relationship with them. Similarly, I noticed that as her interactions with Americans increased, she felt more comfortable and began to see them as “really helpful.” Although she experienced discrimination and explicitly attributed it to “having a different skin color” and being “foreign,” she refused to generalize it to all Americans. As a reader I also became aware that Jigna was trying to construct the story of her journey as triumphing over a series of challenges and through that beginning to grapple with questions of otherness, home, and identity. Throughout the story, the dynamics of the plot was also revealed by Jigna’s use of evaluative phrases, such as “this was the most difficult time of my life” and “(it was) the biggest adjustment of all”. One significant turning point in her story occurred when she moved into her own home for the first time and began to feel “settled” in the U.S. This turning point proved central in her unfolding experience of ‘home.’

Jigna’s story is well structured. Her life is stable up until she marries H. and lives with him in Mumbai. The trajectory begins to rise with H.’s departure and then her own to the U.S. It
dips sharply during the stage when she arrives in the U.S. and experiences the “three most difficult years” of her stay in the U.S. Following that, the story continues a moderate but steady rise, until once again she and H. are faced with the prospect of their older son marrying an American woman. Her story, once again, ends on a rise as it moves to the present moment in an overall positive tone with Jigna accepting her son’s decision.

Participant Two: Pradina

At the time of the interview, Pradina was a 74 year old, married, Gujarati, Indian American female (self-identified). Just as Jigna, she has lived in the U.S. for the past forty four years. Pradina lives with her husband, who is a retired physician, in Pittsburgh. She has a son and a daughter, both of whom are married. Pradina has five grandchildren.

I was acquainted with Pradina and her husband prior to her participation in the study. Since she lived in the city, relatively close to my apartment, she had given me rides to the Jain/Hindu temple whenever there were festivals or other social gatherings. I was only vaguely aware of Pradina’s journey to the U.S. from India through glimpses she had shared during our brief car rides. Now I was eager to fill in the gaps and when she called to arrange the interview, I was barely able to hide my curiosity and excitement. Pradina welcomed me into her brightly-lit living room and we settled at her dining table to do the interview.

Before the Journey

Pradina comes from Baroda, a moderately big city in the state of Gujarat, in India. Historically, Baroda or Vadodara has been an important and famous center for higher education in western India. It is the home of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (M.S. University, Vadodara), which is the largest university in Gujarat. Pradina begins her story in 1963 when she was married and living with her husband, S., and their son. Her family also included
her in-laws, two brothers-in-law, and a sister-in-law. S. had recently completed his physician’s training from the M.S. University and had just started working as a doctor in the city. Indirectly alluding to the 1965 Immigration Act, Pradina pointed out that during the early 1960s many of her husband’s friends from the medical school (mostly his seniors) and some from his class had migrated to various parts of the United States to work as physicians. S. was in touch with these friends, who often encouraged him to come to the U.S., as, “it was relatively easy to find work as a doctor there. They really needed them at that time. You only had to do your residency again.” Pradina explained that if one wanted to work as a physician in the U.S. at that time, then one had to pass the exam offered by the Educational Commission for Medical Graduates of the U.S. or the ECMG exam. Although S. wanted to come to the U.S. “from the beginning,” his father was against it and so “he had postponed it for a while.” Once his father passed away, his mother gave him “permission to go” and he ultimately passed the ECMG exam in 1968 along with “a lot of his friends from his own batch, they all gave the exam together and came around the same time.” According to Pradina, 1968 “may have been the last year that the exam was offered in India.” With the help of a friend who was in Boston, S. found a job as a resident physician on a one year contract at a hospital in Buffalo, New York. At that time he was able to obtain visa for three years. Pradina and S. decided that S. would first go alone to the U.S. in order to see if it was “possible and suitable to live there with a family” and only then make arrangements for them to come there. S. left for Buffalo at the end of December, 1967.

**Theme 1: “We had always planned to return.”** While reflecting back on this early stage of her journey, Pradina clarified that she and S. had decided to come to the U.S. only for a short-time (initially only for as long as their visa allowed) and not to “settle down long-term” as many other Indians (for example, some of S.’s friends). For her, their primary intention in
coming to the U.S. was to stay for a year as visitors so as to be able to travel and see the country. They planned to use the money S. would make by working as a resident to fund their traveling. Pradina called it a “trial trip.” I noticed that she did not identify the opportunity to come to the U.S. for herself or her husband as a rare opportunity to secure a financial future, a theme so common among first-generation immigrant Gujarati Indians at that time. Coming to the U.S. as visitors also implied that they planned to return to India:

“Just to see and…(we)could see a foreign country and also could get experience (working, living) here, ‘how is everything here.’ Because you would not just come or even think about coming to the U.S. that easily (just as tourists). We thought, ‘If we get a job then we would go and as a visitor we would return in three years. We had always planned to return. We had come already with the plan to return, thinking, ‘it will be fine. We will see everything. We will see the country and since he is getting a job, we would be able to manage (everything).’”

Since coming to the U.S. was never a long-term plan of immigration for Pradina and S., she did not feel apprehension, worry, or a great sense of pressure to succeed. She acknowledged the uncertainty involved in going to a new country and living there for a year, but minimized fear or sadness for leaving home and country behind. Like tourists to a new country, she felt curiosity, excitement, adventurousness, and most of all, a sense of freedom from knowing that if “it did not work out” or they did not like it, they could come back “home.” As a reader, I did not feel a sense of risk-taking or chance on behalf of Pradina. She perceived it as a rare opportunity to explore and experience a new country, which was uncommon and rare for Indians at that time,

“Whenever we cannot feel like living here, it was one year residency program then if you like it then you go for next year sign also, so if you didn’t like it, just go back (home to
India.) Well, it was going to be new experience. You always want to know that ok, ‘Since you are getting a chance in another country, there is no harm in going and seeing. What trouble is going to be there (there is not going to be any trouble)? We wanted to see another country. Even when we live here in this country, we feel, ‘Let’s go (and) see Australia.’ We go traveling every year. We go to South America, New Zealand, Europe. It was the same thing. We will never get chance and this way you get a job for three years on visitor’s visa, then ‘why not?’ We never thought about staying in the U.S. because our visa was also for only three years. So, from the beginning we never thought or planned to stay here. We came thinking, ‘Since we are getting the visa, we will go for three years and see everything and the country.’ We went to see Chicago, New York, other cities, whenever we had a chance, a vacation, we would go and then we will go back.”

The very possibility to return back to India, if “things did not work out,” that seemed available to Pradina stood out to me as a reader and as a migrant to the U.S. myself. It reminded me of the significant pressure I felt, even when I was coming to this country as a student, to succeed and how much was at stake, not only for me but also for my family. Pradina added that she and her husband already had a house in Baroda and S. did not have to worry about securing employment if they had decided to return as it would have been “easy for him to get a job as a doctor.” This pointed to the privilege and the luxury that Pradina was able to access.

**Preparing For the Journey**

In only four to five weeks’ time, after first arriving at the hospital in Buffalo, New York, S. prepared and sent the legal paperwork for Pradina and their son to join him there. He had decided that “it would be fine” for them to come to the U.S. and live because there were four other Indian doctors and their families working and living in the same hospital. After spending
time with them S. realized that it was possible to live there with a family without too many challenges:

“Then there were couple of other Indian residents, in the same hospital and with the family. So he knew that there is no problem in (living here) with family. They all had kids, one and they were all living in the same quarters of the hospital, next to each other. So, it was not a problem of, ‘what would we do if we came here with family?’ Because everybody had their wife and one one kid. So, there was no problem. So, I came afterwards.”

Pradina started to prepare for her journey to the U.S. with a sense of excitement. Her mother-in-law felt happy and some of her worry was relieved by the knowledge that S. and Pradina would not be completely alone since some of S.’s friends were also in the U.S. Pradina felt sad for leaving her family but she appeared to make sense of this loss and sadness by comparing the experience to leaving her maternal family after marriage to live with her husband’s family. The idea of leaving home and family to go to a completely new country did not feel as shocking and overwhelming to her as a result of being married for four years and living with S. in India prior to joining him in the U.S.

“I was happy to come but then again I was sad too to leave the family because there was no one from my family (who was here in the U.S.) and even now you can say that there is almost no one. There are some, nieces and nephews, but no brothers or sisters. So, when you have to leave (them), then little…I mean, when (I) married, I had already left my family behind for four years. So, we knew that ‘Now…we are going only to visit and not to stay.’ So, it was not that kind of shock. Not like ones (women) who come here right after they are married. I did not feel that shocked, because I had already left my family.”

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Journey Begins in the U.S.: Initial Adjustment and Challenges

Pradina arrived in Buffalo, New York in February of 1968. One of the first things she noticed as she stepped out of the airport was “feet or more of snow.” This was the first time Pradina had seen snow and it “shocked” her. S. came to receive her. He did not have a car at that time but a friendly nurse in his department came with him to receive Pradina and their son. They lived in Buffalo for two and a half years. During this time S. changed his residency job once, to another hospital after six months of Pradina’s arrival. For Pradina, these initial years in Buffalo in particular, and the U.S. in general, were characterized by her encounter with people and families who provided invaluable support to her and with whom she established life-long relationships. These included both other first-generation Indian immigrants and Americans. The Indian immigrant families were Pradina’s neighbors at the hospital and they had arrived in the U.S. approximately six months before she did. Thus, having longer to adjust to the new culture in terms of everyday things such as needing/having a car, food, language, and weather, they were able to cushion Pradina’s transition and accommodation. Over time, she came to trust and rely on these friendly neighbors with the result that she did not feel overwhelmed, isolated, lonely, or “too much homesick.” A large university with many students from India in Buffalo further provided a variety of opportunities to Pradina and her family to get and stay connected with cultural activities, such as participating in religious celebrations and festivals and watching Hindi films from India. These were organized by the Indian student organization. While in Buffalo, with the encouragement of an American neighbor, Pradina took a computer course and was able to get a job as a data entry person at a local insurance company for a year. Her son started kindergarten there. From time to time, Pradina missed her family in Baroda and kept in touch with them through letters.
**Theme 2: Relationships and homesickness.** The centrality of relationships appears for the first time during this stage of Pradina’s story. She makes sense of her first-time, early experience in the U.S. in the context of the people she encounters and relationships she is able to establish with them. Having even a very small community of Indian immigrants there to slowly become part of and come to rely on protects her from feeling overwhelmed, isolated, lonely, and homesick. Not only do these relationships provide guidance and help with day-to-day activities such as grocery shopping, child-care, and laundry, but also a sense of belonging and family:

“Only four…all four were in the same hospital… None of them were Gujaratis; one was a Maharashtrian, one was a Sheikh…but they were all really nice. And all of us wives were at (staying) home so we would take turns to do lunch at someone’s home. That way even the kids could play together. So, it was not like that hard that, ‘what will we do now, what will we do?’ We were all together. Just as we are sitting here right now at about 10-11 am in the morning, once everyone is ready after their baths and breakfast, we would meet up with each other at about 10-11 am in the morning, once everyone is ready after their baths and breakfast. And we spent the whole day together at home; we cooked together and we ate together. We would all be together until 4-5 pm until (our/my) husband would come home. So, it was not like, shocking, shocking. Since you have friends now, you don’t constantly feel, ‘Let’s go back (home), let’s go back.’”

Although Pradina acknowledged some difficulty in having access to Indian groceries on a regular basis, cooking with her neighbors helped to share “tips and ideas” about how to cook with locally available vegetables and spices. She continues to use those “tips” to this day:

“The rest you had to buy from here. (For example), you did not get our daal here, so we used to eat that ‘yellow split’ (lentil); we did not get (wheat) flour like today, so roti used
to be red. It was different things, like vegetables, if you don’t get green chilies and cilantro, then you use dry, red chilies to make Kadhi. I mean, you make it by adopting. It’s not that big thing. At least, you can eat everything, whatever is available. If you don’t find our vegetables, then it is from here (in the U.S.). Even now, we don’t go to buy Indian (vegetables), patara, and Indian beans every day. We buy cabbage, cauliflower, beans whatever is available in the grocery store.”

If her Indian neighbors helped to reduce her isolation and homesickness, Pradina’s American neighbor encouraged her to use her free time and work outside the home. She credits this relationship for giving her confidence and for opening up the possibility that she could work outside the home in the U.S.,

“Next place we went my neighbor was very good. She pushed me even, saying, ‘Why are you sitting (at) home? Go to work. If you go to work, I will take care of your child.’ Because she was not married or anything. She was very good so I took a course for 3-4 months. (First two years) it was not miserable or anything, ok. I was happy because I had very good neighbors. She was just like my older sister. She take care of me if I need it. She took care of my son also. I went for the classes and I went for the job.”

As a reader it was possible to see how these early relationships, both with Indian immigrants and with Americans, provided a fundamentally positive sense making template to Pradina to cohesively understand those early experiences in a completely new culture. She explicitly denied experiencing any racism or discrimination during this time as a result of being/appearing different or “foreign.” When trying to understand her experience with getting used to communicating in English, she once again credited her positive interactions and relationship with American nurses and colleagues at work to give her confidence. It was the same with her
decision to continue to wear sari at work rather than change to wearing pant and shirt, the more common way of dressing in the U.S. Language and dress code, two markers through which first-time immigrants are frequently perceived by others and experience themselves as ‘outsiders,’ did not become experiences of otherness for Pradina,

“No, no, I mean, you feel inside that…When you come, you feel that, ‘How am I going to say?’ Because we are not talking in English in India. But it didn’t bother anything because that nurse and the dietician, I can say that she used to come to our houses also and she take us outside too and she wanted to learn Indian things too so she can make for all these doctors in the hospital when she is…the Indian things. So, she come to our house sometime and she says, ‘show me this one thing—how to make pulao, how to make upma or something. So, I can make one dish for doctors. So they can get Indian dish.’ So, we talk to her and I never felt that I couldn’t speak anything…or she would not understand me or anything… I can wear my saris also. I never had to buy anything American also. They allowed to because there is one Indian Bengali girl was working there and she was wearing saris all the time.”

**Journey of Finding Home**

After finishing his residency in Buffalo, New York, Pradina moved to Boston where S. had decided to pursue a one year fellowship. They lived in Boston for a year. Here, as before, Pradina and S. found a community of friends that helped them to facilitate their transition. She particularly highlighted the unexpected and exceptional help she received from an American neighbor who was the care-taker of her apartment building and had a son the same age as hers. Both boys went to the same school nearby. Pradina was able to find a job similar to the one she had in Buffalo and wanted to work, but she did not have anyone to look after her son after
school. The care-taker neighbor, just as her previous neighbor in Buffalo, encouraged Pradina to work by offering to take and bring back her son from school with his own son. He explained that he and his wife were happy as now their children had a friend,

“…again I was looking in the 4th of July paper for the, like offers, what they have here, at least to see. And there was an opening one place. I said, ‘Ok, let me go for interview. What happens, let me see at least.’ And they said, ‘you can come today, right away if you want to.’ I said, ‘No, because I have to find somebody who take care of my son. His school I have to see and school starts in September. So, I will let you know if I am coming or not.’ Then, our super who take care of the apartments who lives next door and he had one boy, my son’s age and one daughter. They didn’t have any kids around to play so he was very happy. That’s why he gave us apartment too. So, he used to take his son to school and bring him back from school. So, he took my son to school and bring him back. So that was the thing that he would do for me, everything. Wherever I went, I found people who can take care of me and I am sure I will be as good as them, but I cannot tell that for myself. But any place I went, I got good neighbors. So, it went for the whole year.”

During this time, Pradina’s sister-in-law arrived in the U.S. after her marriage. When Pradina went to meet her in New York, her sister-in-law suggested to her that if she would leave her son in New York, then he would be able to help her (sister-in-law) with learning to speak English and she could look after him. This would allow Pradina to work. She seemed hesitant in the beginning as her son was only seven years old at the time, but described with immense pride in him that he stayed with his aunt without any “fuss or trouble.”
As their year in Boston was coming to an end in 1971, the United States government passed a law that made it very easy and quick for physicians and their families to acquire green cards and set these immigrants on the path to citizenship. Pradina and S. decided to apply and received them. Now, S. had completed a residency and a fellowship in the U.S. and was legally free to work as a licensed physician. He secured a job at a hospital in Syracuse, New York upon a suggestion from another Indian physician friend. She worked in the same hospital. Pradina lived with her family in Syracuse for the next seven years. Pradina described her time in Syracuse extremely fondly as she “gained a whole family” in the form of the same physician friend of her husband’s and her family,

“So, we went there and they were very good friends, like three sisters, both married, one is not married, mother is living with them, so it’s like I got my family. They were not Gujarati, they were Christians, from southern India. I felt that this is my family. I go there from morning to night, even. I eat there. I bring tiffin for my husband (from there) also when he is working late and I …. They cook, I never cook with them, but I always ate there. My son also come from school there…They play…because both (sisters) who are married, they both have a kid, same age as my son. So, it was so much good that they play together. I have like, three sisters, mother. Sundays also I go to their house, we are there and all the time we are there.”

In addition, Pradina became active in the small, fifteen-family, first-generation Indian immigrant community in Syracuse by organizing and celebrating various festivals such as Diwali and other social activities,

“So…it was good and one or two neighbor were just walking distance (from my house) so we used to get in the afternoons also. Eat lunches together, go shopping together. So,
changes came, but we never had any problems and he got a friend too everywhere we went.”

**Making Home, Feeling at Home**

After living in Syracuse for seven years with his family, S. received a good job offer in Pittsburgh in a private practice. They moved to Pittsburgh in 1979 with their son and now also a daughter. Pradina and S. raised their family in Pittsburgh and have lived there for the past 30 years. During this time, other members of her family from India—her two brothers-in-laws, have also moved to the U.S. with the help of S. and Pradina. Later her mother-in-law also moved here and lived with Pradina for sixteen years:

> “Here again in Pgh we are for thirty years. The Jain community here is just like a whole family. Everybody is for another; know what’s going on. Even my neighbors (right now) are all Americans. I never had any Indian neighbors, but they are like my own brothers (and) sisters. I have never had any problems with anybody.”

**Theme 3: Child-rearing and challenges.** Pradina’s focus, at this stage of her story, is on settling down in Pittsburgh and raising both her children while continuing to rely on the Gujarati, Jain, Indian-American community there. She points out that there is a fourteen year age difference between her son and daughter. One of the central challenges for Pradina, as a first-generation, Gujarati, Jain parent, was finding a right balance between discipline, trust, and autonomy, especially when they were adolescents and young adults. Pradina makes clear that she and S. wished that both their children shared their Gujarati, Jain, and Indian identities, but acknowledges her deep sense of uncertainty, worry, and apprehension regarding how to accomplish it. Adopting a method of trial and error, while simultaneously relying on Gujarati, Jain, and Indian traditions and values, she carves out unique ways to raise her children in two
different cultures. She taught her son to read and write Gujarati at home during summer
vacations while her daughter learnt it at the Sunday school in the Jain/Hindu temple in
Pittsburgh,

“You must know your own language. If you go to another country, you can learn Spanish
and you can learn French, but you must know your mother tongue. You know, my
mother-in-law stayed here for sixteen years and so they (my children) had to speak only
in Gujarati with her. And when I would write letters (to my family) in India, they were
required to write a paragraph or two in Gujarati too… If you go to India and don’t know
Gujarati then you can’t read the boards over there, you can’t talk to your own
grandmother (if you don’t know Gujarati). Children there would be speaking so much (in
Gujarati) and someone asks your children and they would take fifteen minutes to answer
the questions, then what good is that? It wouldn’t matter, even if they are 100% smart.
That’s why it was necessary. That way they could also talk to their grandmother. It is
absolutely needed for that. How else you would communicate with your parents?”

This highlights how language is a fundamental site for the transmission of not only cultural
values and traditions, but also for identity formation for immigrants. Sunday school at the temple
not only helped with Gujarati. She took her children there so that they could learn about and
participate in various Jain activities and festivals. The Temple also played a significant role in
providing a space and a community through which her children learnt about other Gujarati and
Indian values, traditions, and culture:

“Actually it helps with the temple and everything because they have gone to the Sunday
schools here. So, they learn little bit all this, our culture, our religion, our stories. So
they…plus how we live in our house.”
While contemplating the lives of her children, Pradina highlights the fluid, multi-directional (back and forth or trial and error), and tentative process that she found useful in coming to terms with the reality of raising children in two very different cultures. The movement back and forth between trusting her children so as to be able to give them the autonomy they needed to survive and thrive in the American culture while also ensuring their safety, well-being, and transmission of Gujarati, Indian identity emerges clearly:

“…it was because the time changes, so little bit they (my children) want to do something which we don’t like it. They want to stay out a little bit longer and we don’t want to but that’s the way here it is. If we say, ‘Ok, come home 8 o’clock. We don’t want you to be out after 8 or 9 pm.’ The party starts by 8 o’clock. How can you say, ‘No?’ Like we socialize they have to socialize too and they start by 8 or 9...So, it is kind of... a little bit in your mind that is it good or not. Should we let it do or not?’ But you have to. Even she is good but you know what happens. Somebody will do anything to you and you don’t know even. So, you kind of little bit worried. Little bit that ok, ‘should we let them go or not’ but you cannot control those things. Like our living is different than this American people, little bit, right? So they know our values and our things so they don’t do what we really don’t want them to do, but in our mind, inside it says, ‘is it alright? Everything will be going ok or not.’ We used to discuss sometime and it was not much. They know our values. That’s what I think. They know what we like it, what won’t like it. But otherwise we can’t tell that ok, our kids that don’t go with American; don’t do that because Indians are always good.”

As a reader, it became clear to me that Pradina employs empathy and a sense of wonder to understand the challenges her own children and all second-generation children encounter,
“So, they know, our kids also know even it is American or Indian but what is good for us and what is not good for us. So, that’s why they don’t think that ‘ok, that we have to be with just Indians and not Americans. Whoever is good; we know what we want, our ideas should be the same—how to raise the family? How to live?’ … They have seen our life also, they have seen their (U.S., American) life also and they study all the way higher education so they know what they want in their life. So, they are not thinking, ‘Ok my mom likes this and my dad likes this, so I have to do this.’ They are kind of free in their mind that what they like it is Indian or American, doesn’t make any difference to them….It might be very hard for them too to please parents and their do things their own way. It is hard, I mean. I can imagine it must be going through their mind also, those things. I don’t think I can really know how (they have adopted) because when we talk to our kids and other our friends’ kids and they all tell that, ‘Don’t think that your kids asking for…what you are asking for Indians, just go with Indians. Not with Americans, not (be) friends with them, don’t go eat with them, don’t get married with them.’ It’s not going to work because you have brought (them) here. They are studying with them. They are same with us, whether Indian or American. It makes no difference to us (parents). For us, our values and their values have to be the same. So that’s how they do it. It’s kind of amazing to me also because I don’t know how they do it.”

The way Pradina and S. came to terms with and accepted both their children’s decision to marry Americans exemplifies the constant balancing act demanded by the task of raising children as a first-generation, immigrant parent:

“We were not prepared at that time, but I am telling you that if it’s going to happen to anybody. But the first thing happens then it is shocking to you that it happened, but there
is no choice anyway. As far as worrying about it is concerned, it is only about ‘what if they don’t get along and something happens?’ But generally they are good together and they love each other, it works good. Fine, nothing to worry about for twenty years.”

Theme 4: “Should we stay or should we go?” Feeling at home. When Pradina and S. first came to the U.S., it was only for a short time, as tourists. Their hope was to explore and experience a new country as visitors while using the money that S. made from his job to use for traveling. More than financial concerns or desire for a ‘better future,’ it is the curiosity and adventurousness that initially motivate her to come to the U.S. At that stage of her story, she is clear and confident about the short-term nature of her “trial trip” and wish to return back ‘home to India’ at the end of their visitors’ visa. In Pradina’s effort to makes sense of their (her and S.’s) decision to apply for green cards at the end of his fellowship in Boston after three and a half years in the U.S., I began to sense a subtle shift in their intention of being in the U.S. only as visitors for a short-time. She reflects that the decision to apply for a green card, which indirectly hinted at the possibility of immigrating to the U.S., was now motivated by financial considerations of saving enough money, but only so that they could return to India and could use it for S.’s practice there. At this stage, even the legal step of obtaining a green card and maybe citizenship in the future still primarily makes sense to Pradina only as a short-term, temporary opportunity, at the end of which she “always wanted to return back home to India.” Even in the midst of this seeming clarity, she appears to be acutely aware of and feels the uncertainty and ambiguity that this decision could give rise to regarding her notions of ‘returning home.’ The desire to stay and return exists simultaneously at that stage for Pradina, hinting at the emerging complexity and multiplicity of meanings of ‘home’ for the first time:
“Once… because in the residency there is not much pay scale, anyway so we cannot save anything. Whatever you get, you finish it. So, now you got a green card and residency is over, so you are going to get from $8000 to $28000. So, that’s the…why did we did all this residency in India and did it again here because we wanted to see these things. Now after you did again these things and we are going back again in the (with) zero (no savings). Since we have the green card, why not stay for a couple of years and make some money which we can invest there and start good (back home). So, that’s how it starts, you know, once you stay (pause)… then you say, ‘Let’s try.’… and son is older and he is in school and all these things happen, you know. Then you think, ‘Ok, why not stay for a while, then go back.’ And that’s how everybody stays, I mean not everybody, but most of the people. They think that they will go back, they will go back, but…”

As Pradina’s journey unfolds, so does her notion of ‘home.’ It is now relationality and community, more than financial security, adventurousness, or indebtedness to the U.S. for prosperity that guides her sense-making of feeling and being at ‘home.’ Her children, other family members, and immersion in the lager Gujarati, Jain community in Pittsburgh are connected to feeling “at home”:

“Actually we don’t have (a) home anywhere. According to our religion we say that we don’t have anything of our own. We have to leave everything (behind), from here (U.S.) as well as there (from India). But, since we are attached (through our desires), since our children are there, we want to go to our children. We have our kids here. Our family is here. So, I mean, there…In a way (in India) there is nobody. Brother, sisters are there, but your family is here. Now this only feels like home. Since we are not living in India, how can I feel that is home? Maybe if we were to return and settle there and stay there for a
year or two then maybe I can say, ‘This is my home now. I don’t have this home anymore.’ But right now, this is my home…No matter where I go…”

If Pradina is and feels ‘at home’ in the U.S. and her house here, she immediately complicates this clear and straight-forward experience and meaning of home while contemplating about India. It is where she has come from and she returns periodically. Her relationships there to members of her maternal family and larger Jain community serve the same purpose as those in the U.S. in making India as home. Most importantly, it is a deep sense of rootedness and debt she feels toward Baroda and India that make them her ‘motherland’ and home:

“But that is (India) is our motherland, so that way it is ours. That way that’s my home. Even now you feel that, ‘It’s my place.’ Even if I have to go to India for something now… I feel that since they are building this hospital here (in Baroda), I want to give 2 lakh rupees because I want to help them because that’s my home and that’s what we do all the time we go…They are building new wards at the Baroda Medical (hospital) so we gave $10,000-$15,000 because from there we came here. They have given us all this—study, they gave us knowledge, so we have an obligation to them. So that way it’s my home…Because it’s our own country, I mean. I feel that it’s my country. I can get adopted to everything there also.”

Pradina effectively navigates a delicate tension between multiple meanings of home, fluidly inhabiting each.

Theme 5: “Who am I?” When Pradina is encouraged to take stock of her immigrant experience in the U.S., she particularly contemplates questions of identity and selfhood. She first attempts to make sense of who she is through the eyes of others—in this case, not other Indians
or Gujaratis but by other Americans and non-Indians. ‘How am I perceived by others?’ is the question that initially guides her in her identity construction:

“It would be apparent to them, they would know right away that you are Asian, you are an Indian. I mean, nobody asks you that at least. And everybody knows. Even we go any places they know that we are Indian. Nobody is saying that… They will never see me as American. They will know right away that we are not Americans. From the color of our skin, our dressing…you don’t wear pants everywhere. They know, I mean. They know.”

It seems obvious to Pradina that she would never be seen as an American by others based purely on the color of her skin. I wondered if, in this instance, she was trying to voice and understand experiences when she felt like a foreigner or an outsider. At the same time this could also be her way of ‘othering’ Americans and non-Indians, based on their skin color and other physical attributes. The process of ‘othering’ and stereotyping, thus, becomes a strategy for identity formation and maintenance for her. Even having American citizenship which means being an American citizen does not feel like being an American to Pradina, “…It’s correct that we are citizen. (I) can say Indian-American, but you can never say only ‘American.’”

Ultimately, it is in the identity of and as an ‘Indian’ that Pradina confidently feels ‘at home,’ but even then a fundamentally performative, fluid, complicated, and functional nature of the lived experience of her identity formation and its mediation with selfhood as a first-generation Gujarati Indian-American emerges almost immediately,

“Indian, first Indian, of course… but still you are born Indian and you have grown up in India for all these years, your first 30-35 years of life have been spent there. You are an Indian. Indian comes everywhere (but) well, divisions come about. Now, if you go somewhere and four South Indians are there and even if you are sitting there, they will
talk in their own language. It automatically comes that…not that they want to insult you or anything, but naturally comes. If there is one Gujarati and one South Indian—you know that she does not know Gujarati, she might not understand. You try to speak in English too, but still again… like, there is always some English mixed in even if you try to speak in Gujarati…If you are with other Gujaratis, (for example, you are at a) Gujarati Samaj dinner or at a Gujarati play or at Garba for Navratri, then you are Gujarati. But now other people come even. Everything is mixed now. You are a Jain when at temple ceremonies and festivals.”

Pradina, thus, performs multiple identities while anchoring them in and being anchored by the identity of ‘Indian,’ it becoming a road-map for navigating her immigrant experience in the U.S.

**Holistic Analysis of Form of Pradina’s Narrative**

Pradina’s story, much like Jigna’s, is well structured in terms of clear and sequential emergence of stages. Also, somewhat similar to Jigna’s narrative, the relational, interpersonal axis, with its focus on relying on and building long-term relationships, is dominant throughout each stage and overall story. Pradina constructs and presents her story in an overly positive and triumphant tone. Her story is the story of a woman who adapts. Events and challenges, big and small, that might have been expected to upset the equilibrium are taken in stride. I noticed a high use of second-person singular, ‘you,’ all through her story in contrast to first-person singular, ‘I.’ I wondered if this was a rhetorical strategy to find some distance from her own experiences and in so doing render them more positively.

Overall, the structure and progression of Pradina’s story is characterized by a slow and steady advancement (slowly ascending) upward toward financial security, strong and positive relationship with both children, and a deep immersion in the Indian community in Pittsburgh.
One exception to this structure was a turning point in the story which occurred when Pradina and S. decided to apply for a green card and their decision to immigrate to the U.S. and become citizens, rather than return home as they had initially hoped.

**Participant Three: Vijay**

Vijay is a 68-year old married Gujarati Indian American male (self-identified). At the time of the interview, he lived in Pittsburgh with his wife. He has one son and daughter, who both live away from home, and has one grandchild. For some months of the year his mother also lives with him. He has lived in Pittsburgh for the past forty three years. Vijay worked for an international company located in the area as an engineer for forty two years before retiring four years ago.

Vijay was the last participant I interviewed. Upon a request from my aunt, he had agreed to participate in the study and shared with me that he had always been “curious about research and so wanted to be part of it.” I was aware that Vijay and his family were close friends of my aunt, who has also lived in the area, and I had passingly met him at various cultural and religious celebrations at the Jain/Hindu temple. We met at his home for the interview on a rainy morning. Vijay’s broad, open smile, curiosity, sense of humor, and a genuine willingness to share his story stayed with me long after the interview was over.

**Before the Journey**

Vijay spent most of his childhood and adolescent years in a small town in Gujarat, called Boru, with his paternal grandmother. At that time, his immediate family lived in a very small one-room apartment in Mumbai. His family included four brothers and two sisters. He explained that lack of space and financial considerations prompted his parents to send him to his grandmother. He finished his early education in Gujarat and came to Mumbai in 1961 to pursue
higher education and a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering. He was the first one in his family to complete higher education and get an engineering degree. After graduating in 1967, he started to work as an engineer in Mumbai. During this time, Vijay was slowly becoming aware of the need for, and availability of, “plentiful job opportunities” for engineers in the United States mainly through his best friend whose older brother was in the U.S., working as an engineer. His best friend ultimately left for the U.S. to work as well and started to encourage Vijay to come to the U.S. by assuring him of his help. Ultimately, Vijay decided to go to the U.S. with the hope of finding employment there as an engineer and “settling down.”

His best friend at the time was working in Pittsburgh and advised Vijay to first come to the U.S. as a student to pursue a master’s degree in engineering as it was “easier to get a student visa and I-94.” Once in the U.S., he would then be able to find work while completing his degree. He applied to a university in Pittsburgh and was able to secure admission in the master’s degree for industrial engineering.

Preparation For the Journey

Vijay was the first one in his family to decide to leave home and move to another country. His family was “actually they were worried you know that how I will live in U.S.A by myself, you know. Without family support and stuff like that.” They were worried that Vijay would be alone in a completely new country and culture. For them, it meant worrying about his eating and other day-to-day activities, such as cooking food and buying groceries. Despite being worried and sad, “they supported all the way, you know for me coming to U.S.A and financially and stuff like that…my family and my brothers as well.” Vijay shared some of the anxiety and sadness of his family, but he was also excited to come to the U.S. His feelings of uncertainty and worry about surviving and adjusting in the U.S. were moderated by, “the friend of mine, he gave
me full support that he will take care of me and stuff like that. So, actually I was worry free and I was excited to come to this country.”

**Theme 1: “Responsibility to my family.”** For Vijay, the decision to come to the U.S. was motivated, foremost, by a deep sense of responsibility he felt for his family. It was his desire to provide financially for his family that motivated him to take the immense risk of going to the U.S.—an expensive undertaking for his modest family. His reflection about this stage of his journey highlights his clear single-mindedness and determination to take care of his family. This meant taking full advantage of the high demand for professionally educated and technically trained persons in the U.S. at that time and the ease of migration made possible through the 1965 Immigration Act. If Vijay is determined to financially uplift his family and improve their life through taking the risk of leaving them to go to a new country and culture, he also acknowledges the role of having helpful family and friends that trust him, support him, and believe in his ability to succeed completely. It appears that for Vijay migrating to the U.S. was a confluence of a number of personal, social, and political factors—his determinism to succeed in his “dream” of financially helping his family; financial support from family and strong friendships; and the decision by the United States government to open immigration for Asians for the first time in forty years since the early 1920s:

“Actually when I was in college at that time everybody knew about the U.S., that it is a rich country and jobs are plentiful and stuff like that and if you can work over here then you can make lot more money and stuff like that and that was my idea actually. Because my family was not very rich or anything like that. I was considered like middle class and my idea was to come over here and get a nice job and then just stay at the job. Actually my idea wasn’t to study in those days, you know. Actually the BE degree from India was
recognized over here and you can get a green card, you know. So, I right after I came in September in 1969, I applied for green card (in) November-December. Because everybody knew that America is a pretty rich country and you can see in those days...in India you were making 600 rupees in a month while you were making $600-700 a month over here. So, there was a big difference between what you can earn in India and what you could earn in this country. It was like, you can say like a dream of whatever, you know. I would call it a ‘dream.’ And the dream was to make decent money and... take care of the family. That was the whole idea. That way it was a big step for me as well as my family.”

Vijay recalls those last few days in Mumbai, before leaving for the U.S., as exciting but also filled with some trepidation. All his relatives came to bid him farewell, including his grandmother from Boru. At that time, Vijay was dating M., who also had her sister in the U.S. According to him, since M. was familiar about life in America from her sister, she wasn’t “that much worried about” him leaving and going there. She was excited and supported him in his “dream” of providing for his family. She was aware of the advantages that this opportunity could provide for Vijay and their future life together. They planned that Vijay would call her to the U.S. once he found employment.

Vijay related that he had some prior experience of leaving home and family behind in the past and “making home in a new place”—leaving home in Mumbai as a child to go live with his grandmother in Boru until he was seventeen years old. Reaching back to that experience also helped him cope with leaving his family and friends behind,

“Actually, I was not too much in love with Bombay in those days. I came in 1961 to Bombay so I had no connection with the city, not that much. I mean lot of people are
born and raised in the city, in Bombay and they really love the city. But in my case, up to 10th grade I was staying with my grandmother in a small village. So that was my home. Bombay wasn’t my home even though I did engineering from there and I work over there for four years. But I wasn’t too much connected with the city.”

**Journey of Arriving in the U.S.: Initial Adjustment and Challenges**

Vijay arrived in New York in September of 1969 with another friend of his from Mumbai. His best friend from Pittsburgh came to pick them both up at the airport in New York, and they drove “through the night” to Pittsburgh. He started his degree in industrial engineering at one of the local universities. Vijay shared a two-bedroom apartment with his best friend and three other Indian students. He found the adjustment to the new education system of the U.S., which differed considerably from that of India, to be “easy” as it relied more on regularity of work on a daily basis and projects rather than “a big final exam at the end.” What was particularly helpful to Vijay was that it provided a routine to his days and free time to look for a part-time job. On his student visa he was not allowed to work full-time. Before the end of September (in three-four weeks), he was able to find a part-time job at a motion picture lab. He found this job by “walking around in the area I lived in.” He saw the lab and thought that they might need engineers. When he asked if a job was available, the owner interviewed him and offered him a job,

“Actually, most of my friends, they were working in McDonalds or Dairy Queen or something like that and they were making, in those days, I still remember, $1.65 which was the minimum wage per hour. And actually, I was looking…since we…I didn’t have a lot of money with me, I have to pay tuition and stuff like that even though my friend was willing to lend me money I have to pay him back later on. So, I was looking for a job,
part-time kind of job. So, luckily I came across this motion picture lab. I fill out the application and the boss took interview and he hired me and he said, “can you work full-time?” and I couldn’t work full time, so I said, ‘I can work maybe 4-5 hours per day.’ Oh, I was excited about that job and it was lab job while McDonalds you have to make hamburgers and (work with) meat whereas here it was clean job. Oh, I loved working over there plus I actually… everybody was making $1.65 as I said, I was making $3.35. More than double, you know. So, I was really happy about that. I wrote my parents, you know that I got a job and they don’t have to worry about sending me the money for expenses or anything. So, right away I started supporting me and my college and everything.”

Vijay found a community of Indian friends who were also students at his university. His social interactions at that time were mainly limited to other Indian students and did not include other American students from his class or university. He explained,

“In those days you were not too much worried about making lot of friends and stuff like that. Your main aim was to study or get a job, something like that…Maybe we did not even consider making friends with Americans. We did talk with them for studying and when the teacher was teaching and if it was needed. I have no problem with them or they didn’t have any problem with us. Actually, it was pretty harmonious relationship. Everybody got along. They were not talking about ‘you are Indian or you are from India’ or something like that.”

**Theme 2: Abundance and adjustment.** This early stage of Vijay’s stay in the U.S. was characterized by two seemingly contrasting experiences. On the one hand, Vijay was surprised, happy, and somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer abundance, variety, and affordability of all
things in the U.S., such as space and food in the grocery store. This was different from Mumbai where, in the early 1960s and 1970s, a strict rationing system was in place for everyday things such as gasoline and food grains. This often resulted in scarcity of these products and inflated prices. Vijay had to share his bedroom with his friend, but this was a tremendous improvement for him as he lived in a small apartment in Mumbai with more than ten people:

“Actually, if you live in Bombay, you live in one room apartment or something like that. So, considering that you know this was a big thing, you know. You had a separate kitchen, you had a living room, your bedroom, your bathroom. So, this was a big thing, actually. It was better. Like in India, if you live in chali system, you have to share bathroom, which is common for everybody while here you have your own bathroom and your own shower and stuff like that. So, it was big thing, you know. And you were happy that you were living in your own place.”

To Vijay, even the roads and vehicles in Pittsburgh felt bigger and overwhelming compared to Mumbai:

“Actually in Bombay everything is crowded and a lot of people and scarcity of lot of different things while here it was altogether different. Plenty of things available to you, lot cheaper, lot less people and lot of cars and buses and stuff like that. While in those days it was difficult in Bombay.”

The same sense of abundance is encountered at the grocery store:

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3 A ‘chali’ or a ‘chawl’ refers to a multi-storey building. Each storey or floor of the ‘chali’ comprises of very small, single-room residential structures with a small kitchen area usually made by partitioning the single room. Each storey has one or two restrooms in the common area which are shared by the residents of that floor. Traditionally, in Mumbai, these ‘chawls’ were erected close to numerous clothing mills for the purposes of housing the mill workers and their families. Although, these mills have been closed down, the ‘chawl’ system of residence continues to present day.
“…you went to the grocery store and you see a lot of grocery and stuff like that and everything is filled up and there is no scarcity of anything. While in those days in Bombay you have to stand in a ration line and stuff like that and you have to get the rationing. So, that way it was a big, big change…and everything is available and the prices in those days, in my opinion were very, very low compared to Bombay.”

I wondered if he experienced this sense of abundance when he found a job within three weeks of his arrival with better pay than minimum wage. Overall, these early experiences offered a largely positive perspective of the U.S. to Vijay who felt bolstered by it and increased his confidence of achieving his goal of financial success and future prosperity for himself and his family.

On the other hand, Vijay missed his family and friends from home. He came from a large family who “(were used to) sleeping together and eating together.” He felt lonely by himself. He regularly wrote letters to his family to share with them that he missed them and even Mumbai. Another challenge during those days, for him, was learning to do all household chores. This was very different from when he lived with his family where usually it was the women who did these chores. There was no Indian grocery story in the area, so Vijay had to adapt to using local vegetables and spices. He coped by relying on his friend to “show me the ropes” and developing a routine to do different things, such as laundry, cooking, and grocery shopping. It also kept him busy, thus reducing his loneliness and homesickness:

“Because in those days we were strictly vegetarian (so) plus you have to make everything yourself. In those days there was no (Indian) grocery store. There was no section of, like foreign groceries and stuff like that in regular grocery store. Actually, you cope with making grilled cheese sandwich, mixing fruit cocktail in milk and buying like pizza shells from the store.”
As an immigrant from India, the first ten years stand out to Vijay in light of difficulties such as not having a car, lack of Indian grocery stores and Indian restaurants, and extremely cold weather. Although Vijay acknowledges these contrasting experiences and challenges they presented, he makes sense of them by contextualizing them in the larger goal he had set for himself of doing everything needed to succeed in the U.S. and achieve his “dream.” Ultimately, he uses the language of choice to reinterpret the meaning of this early experience of migration:

“You were excited to be in this country so all this did not come into picture and actually you came to U.S.A for that purpose, you know. Yes. So missing family, missing how you make the food and like that…that was secondary. Actually, you had chosen this place to, I mean, to come over here, right? So, you made a choice and there was no need of complaining. Even though you miss it… You have to bear whatever comes your way.”

**Journey of Finding Full-time Job and Making Home**

Vijay was working part-time but he always wanted to work full-time in the U.S. and immigrate here. In order to do so legally, he needed to apply for a green card. Just over a month after arriving in the U.S., he applied for a green card in November, 1969 and started looking for a full-time job. His green card was approved in January, 1970:

“…So, a lot of companies were not hiring in Pgh area and in those days U.S. Steel and Westinghouse, they were the prime employer in Pgh area. I applied to them, I applied to a lot of different companies outside and everybody replied, ‘No, no, no.’ Finally, I made a phone call. I was looking at Yellow Pages and if I see something electrical, I was calling them. So, I came across motor coils meaning, since it was coils, I call them. The lady answered it and she said, ‘why don’t you come down here for an interview and then we will see.’ So, next day I took a bus in Braddock and went to this lady who was taking
care of the HR. So, I talk to her and she arranged for an interview for me with the chief engineer and vice president and finally they hired me. They offered me the job right away and actually they asked me about the salary and in those days I had a friend who had master’s degree and he was making $650/month so I asked and I had bachelor’s degree. I did not finish my master’s degree. So, I asked for $650 and they gave me $700. So, I was like on top of the world in those days. I got a job and I got a nice salary and everything. And they wanted me to start very next day, right away.”

Once he managed to get a job, Vijay left his master’s program half-way (after two semesters) and made arrangements for his fiancé, M. to come to the U.S. Initially, she came on a visitor’s visa to her sister’s home and then Vijay also applied for her green card. They were married in Pittsburgh in November, 1970:

“It (getting married in the U.S.) is a big deal. Actually a friend of mine, the friend whose place I went for dinner, he got married in Pittsburgh also, so there was some….actually some precedent. We decided to have the ceremony here in Pittsburgh and her sister came over here… We called the priest from New York city and he was working at consulate, New York consulate. That was his full time job, but on the side he was a priest. I paid for his air fare and everything. (Not having our families with us) that was kind of sad you know. But again you are excited to get married so you don’t think too much about being sad (laughs).”

Vijay’s family grew when he had a son and a daughter. Within the next few years, as Vijay became a U.S. citizen, he helped all of his four brothers to immigrate to Pittsburgh. He explained, “My goal was achieved.”
Theme 3: Raising a family. When Vijay’s family grew with the birth of, first his son and then a daughter, the responsibility of “raising them fell solely on M.” as he was frequently required to travel and work over-time. He contrasts this with child-rearing in India where there are other members of the ‘joint family’ who help with child care in multiple ways:

“Actually, in India, as you know, big families is really a plus (an advantage) for small kids and you know when they get raised…you actually don’t know how they get raised, you know. …Over here you have to do everything yourself and M. was really taking care of both of them. Because I was working, I had to go out of town and work a lot of overtime and stuff like that and she was taking care of them. And it was very hard on her.”

Like many first-generation immigrant parents, Vijay emphasized the importance of instilling Gujarati, Jain, and Indian values to his children while only indirectly recognizing that this task, to a large degree, was carried out by his wife. In addition to having strong family ties, Vijay identified Gujarati language as a prime site of cultivation and transmission of Gujarati and Indian values and traditions. For him, if his children could speak and understand Gujarati then they could maintain strong family ties, for example, by being able to communicate with their grandmother and other family members in India. Thus, his children’s ability to know and converse in Gujarati with family and other members of the larger Indian community was a means of ‘Gujarati and Indian’ identity construction, “Because being Indian and Gujaratis you have to know your language plus they are able to communicate with other family members.”

Vijay considers complex and fluid ways by which both his children manage to inhabit multiple identities of being Indian and American, although he also feels that in many important behavioral and attitudinal ways his children are “Americans”: 106
“I mean they look like Indians so they say, ‘Indian’ but behavior wise and stuff like that they are pretty close to being American, you know. (But in school and work) I don’t think they felt anything different in my opinion. Those thoughts did not occur to them that culturally they are different than Americans and stuff like that, you know. Naturally, they have all American friends and they just got along with them pretty well and they got raised that way. Actually, my son, particularly I am talking about my son, you know and my daughter also. (Pause) He is American. I mean, he eats a lot of American food and stuff like that, but he is still vegetarian. So, culturally he is very close to India or Indians, I think one priest came to the temple and was talking about vegetarianism and he became completely vegetarian and he even doesn’t drink milk nowadays. He is like…a vegan. My daughter is vegetarian, she doesn’t eat meat or anything like that. When they were growing up they were non vegetarians. My daughter had to have McDonalds 2-3/week or something like that, but now doesn’t even care you know. So, they are pretty close to India or being vegetarian but their behavior or the way they think, parenting style or whatever you know is pretty close to people over here.”

Vijay is also ambivalent about his children “being more American” as he expressed his desire that “sometimes you feel, ‘they should be more like us,’ especially by adopting the Indian values of taking care of their friends and community more.

**Theme 4: Home.** Vijay takes up the meaning-making frame of family and community to construct and communicate his lived experience of ‘home’—the family, both immediate and extended, that he has built and nurtured with M. and relationships with the larger Gujarati, Jain community in the Pittsburgh area:
“My home is Pittsburgh or this (points to his house). Home, I mean you feel at home here that is the main thing. This is your house. This is your community and stuff like that. While I am in Bombay, I am at her sister’s place or somebody’s place and I don’t, I mean they are nice people. They really take care of you and they behave like you are million bucks or something like that but still you feel good when you come back. ...Right, feeling at home is over here. I mean this is where you live and this is where you spend most of your time, I mean 42-43 years, you know. Actually, that’s longer than staying in India…All 42 years I lived in Pittsburgh area.”

It is in America where Vijay has been able to achieve his goal of prosperity, financial security, and upward mobility for his family that brought him here in the first place. For him, the risk he took all those years ago has paid off. The comfortable life he has been able to build further contributes to his feeling of ‘being at home’ in the U.S.,

“This country has been pretty nice to me actually and it’s nice to most of the Indians because you know they have done pretty well and lot of people have become very rich. The life over here is lot better than living in India because there is no scarcity of anything and stuff like that. You can get whatever you want if you have money. Actually, I wanted to live over here and I am living over here and I never had a thought that I will go back to India.”

Vijay maintains a connection with India through periodic visits and phone calls to his family there, but his candid criticism of a plethora of economic and political problems that have dogged India does not betray any romantic or nostalgic notions about it:

“…when I was working, almost every year I went back to India. I like to visit them. I like to visit my relatives. I like to go to different restaurants and stuff like that. Bombay is
nice in the sense that it’s a good system but lot of people and a lot of dirtiness. Actually living over here is lot better than living in Bombay or in India. First of all I don’t like India’s political system. Each and every person is corrupt. Corruption over here, you know, there is a little bit corruption but not much and most of the corruption comes at the election time or for the election purpose. You cannot use the money somebody gives to you, just for your own purpose. You have to use it for election purpose, something like that. So, mainly I don’t like India’s political system. Each and every politician is corrupt and the people are also corrupt. So, that’s one thing. Second thing is over here there is a value to the human being. In India, it looks like there is no value to the human being.”

**Theme 5: “Who am I?”** Vijay momentarily takes up the notion of being a legal citizen of the U.S. since 1976 and whether and how it contributes to his identity construction and perception of selfhood. Although legally he is an American (his passport, for example, says so) and this has afforded him enfranchisement, it is, somehow, insufficient to the sense-making process of his lived experience of selfhood. For Vijay, the lived experience of his identity is fundamentally connected to where he is from and raised. In other words, where his roots are:

“(laughs) I mean, I wouldn’t say myself American, you know. First of all I say that Indian, Gujarati or Jain or something like that, you know. But first of all I am an Indian, that I came from India. I would not describe myself as American of something even though I have lived lot longer in this country. I voted for each and every president in election and stuff like that since 1976. I am citizen, but still I am not 100% American because I was not born and raised over here. . I mean, legally I am American…Since you are a American citizen, you have to say you are American or something like that, but still I am not born or raised over here. I have not participated in the way most of the American
have participated in the draft and Army. Most of the American, you know, they have served…”

Not being born and raised in the U.S. is also the reason why Vijay rejects the hyphenated identity of ‘Indian-American.’ It is a better “fit” for his children,

“I mean, you can say, American-Indian or Indian-American or something like that but all our kids and stuff like that are…our next generation, they gonna be called Indian-American or whatever…Yeha, I am still probably Indian you know and they will be called Indian-American because they are born to Indians (and) being born and brought up here.”

Only once during his story Vijay explicitly reflects on the issue of discrimination and skin color as it relates to Indians in the U.S. He denies experiencing any discrimination, especially at work but is aware of experiences of discrimination at work that other Indians have shared with him. Vijay connects the discrimination to being perceived as ‘different’ based on the skin color of Indians:

“I just wanted to tell you that (a) lot of people feel like discriminated and stuff like that. I never felt, in my job, that way. People respected me, particularly my boss liked me and everybody respected me at my job. So, contrary to lot of other people’s feelings that they have been discriminated, I don’t feel like discriminated. I have…a lot of people they say that they have been discriminated (for) promotion, jobs and stuff like that… I think it is because of the skin color. Right now, I think, the Republicans are discriminating against the President because he is Black and they don’t like him. Because he is Black…”
Participant Four: Mahesh

At the time of the study, Mahesh was a 72-year old married, Gujarati, Indian American male (self-identified). He came to the United States in 1966 from Mumbai to pursue graduated studies in engineering and ultimately earned a master’s degree in mechanical engineering. He worked for a local steel mining corporation for thirty six years before retiring. When we conducted the interview he lived two hours from Pittsburgh, with his wife A. He has two sons and a daughter-in-law. He has now resided in the United States for the past forty seven years.

I knew Mahesh fairly well during my stay in Pittsburgh as a student. I had been to his home on numerous occasions for different religious celebrations and social gatherings. From a number of conversations I had with him during these informal meetings, I had come to know him as a gentle, soft-spoken, man of few words. When he agreed to participate in the study, it took me a bit by surprise, but I considered it my good fortune to get an opportunity to hear the story of his journey from India to the U.S.

Before the Journey

Mahesh began his story in Mumbai when he was twenty four years old and working for a textile company as an engineer. He had graduated with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering in 1964. Mahesh grew up in Mumbai in a family that comprised his mother and two older brothers. His father had passed away when he was younger. While completing his degree and even when he was working, he was constantly hearing about his friends with engineering degrees going to the U.S., either to pursue further education or to find employment. Some of his friends, who were in the U.S., encouraged him to consider coming to the U.S. One of his brothers was already working in the U.S. as a physician, and he also recommended that Mahesh think about coming to the U.S. Mahesh was consequently aware of opportunities
available to him in America. Considering that he found his work at the textile company very
routine, that the “pay wasn’t very good,” and that he had just recently gotten married with the
responsibility of taking care of his wife and rest of his family, Mahesh decided to go to the U.S.
to pursue a master’s degree in industrial engineering and to find employment.

Preparing For the Journey

The first step for Mahesh, in preparing for going to the U.S., was to discuss it with his
family and wife as it was a significant financial undertaking and therefore a significant risk. He
received “complete support from A.,” his wife and his older brother decided to help him
financially. In the meantime, Mahesh obtained a student visa for three years. The idea of leaving
his family and wife behind filled Mahesh with sadness and anxiety, but he was also determined
to take advantage of the opportunity to make a better future for himself and his family. He was
particularly worried about the ailing health of his mother. The support and encouragement he
received from his wife bolstered his confidence. It was helpful for him to hear from A. that, “It is
a good step for our new life and she agreed.” He was now excited about going to the U.S.

Theme 1: “I did not have any other options.” “First I have to fulfill my dream.”
When Mahesh decided to come to the U.S. he already had a bachelor’s degree in engineering and
a job in Mumbai. But as the youngest son in the family, with two older brothers already
contributing to the family, he felt that he did not have “any other option” but to find an
opportunity that would better his family’s future and bring prosperity. Although he clearly
understood the advantage of going to the U.S. for education and employment, he was
simultaneously aware of the immensity of risk it involved—financial and personal. His
ambivalence is reflected in the hope that he would return back to India after working in the U.S.
for five years:
“I wanted to come to this country, you know because there were a lot of opportunities in this country so that’s why I decided to come here. I did think about that (leaving my family and wife) you know, but I did not have any other options. First I have to fulfill my dream. To do my graduate study and (pause) to be more independent in my career too, moneywise, you know. That was my intension when the first time I come to this country. My intension was that in five years, I will make enough money to recover all my borrowed expenses for travel and other things, you know. I felt bad about leaving them (family), but I did not have any choice. I had to…I wanted to finish…I wanted to fulfill my dream, you know so I did not have a choice. So, I leave them and come here, you know.”

It appears that one way in which Mahesh is able to understand his decision to migrate to the U.S. is by holding in tension two opposing feelings and sense making processes—on the one hand, feeling quite trapped with not having many choices to improve his family’s prospects and realize his ‘dream,’ while on the other feeling a great sense of freedom and anticipation for having access to an opportunity to fulfill his responsibility.

**Arriving in the U.S.: Initial Adjustment and Challenges**

Mahesh arrived in a small university town in the August of 1966. One of the biggest adjustments for him in those early days was to “switch from a married life to being a bachelor.” This meant learning to cook, clean, and grocery shopping. He felt pressured for time as his primary focus was his education. Not having a car in a small town also added to his difficulties. Mahesh survived and coped during this early stage of his life in the U.S. by constantly reminding himself that his goal was to succeed for himself and his family:
“From a married life to a bachelor life, you know. That makes lot of changes to me because I have to cook by myself, clean everything, bring groceries and do my homework too. I did not have any car or nothing you know so I have to go and get grocery…there is no help or nothing and nothing I did in India by myself. So, plus I have to do a whole lot of study so there was too much to do. I have to do it regardless of what happened or what I was used to. So, I did not have a choice. …I started working hard. I set up my goals, you know—to finish my education as soon as possible; I should find a job and to get A. to the U.S. I was very determined.”

Much as Vijay, Mahesh finds the ease of availability and sheer variety of everyday things, such as fruits and vegetables, liberating and accommodating, especially in stark contrast to the scarcity and rationing of basic things prevailing in India at that time:

“I thought I like it U.S.A because there is lot of freedom here and there is no hassle for anything, for food or…There is plenty of juice and fruit here at reasonable prices. So, that’s why I decided to stay in this country. In India, you know you have to stand in a line for your rationing card and you also don’t get milk, even when you stand in a line for milk. So, that’s why a lot of hassles, for all these basic things. But here there are no hassles for anything, you know.”

Since there was no Indian grocery store in the area where Mahesh lived and he did not have a car, he improvised to cook with vegetarian, Indian food using various kinds of beans, vegetables, bread, and rice. He “survived on fruits and vegetables.”

Academically, Mahesh struggled in his first semester because he needed to adapt to a very different teaching and learning system. He was able to find support from other Indian students in his department and also from a very helpful and understanding advisor who regularly
met with him and provided guidance on how to succeed. Other Indian students also became his primary social support. He finished his degree in eighteen months and graduated in 1968.

**Journey of Looking for Job and Home**

The period (approximately fifteen days) between graduating and getting a job was particularly challenging for Mahesh. Upon advice from some friends, Mahesh had applied for jobs at a number of places, but had not received any reply. He then went to an employment agency. While waiting to hear from them, he only had $20 left with him and felt overwhelmed and lost. He wondered if being an Indian was a reason for not receiving and calls for interviews and a job. He understood that any company who would decide to hire him would be “taking a risk as they would be unsure if I would leave to return home. It would also be an expensive affair for them.” He had come to realize that if he did not get a job, he would have to return back to India:

“I felt alone at times. I felt depressed about money situation too, you know. I just had $20-25 left in my pocket. So, I used to go to my friend’s house on the weekend and just stay there. So, I did not have to spend any money on anything. …they supported me at that time. At that time I was thinking about India, (whether) I was better off in India than this country. After I didn’t have any job here and then I was very depressed and looking for a job and went to the employment office, but since there was no job right away… Some of the time I felt bad about staying in this country, you know, because I was spending my brother’s money unnecessarily. There was no alternative too, you know. I had to think of some other alternatives too and had to decide what to do next.”

When Mahesh received a call for an interview from a local steel company through the employment office, he was overjoyed. Following the interview, they offered him the job. He felt
relieved. His company sponsored his green card and also helped him financially so that he was able to make arrangements for A. to join him in the U.S. Mahesh felt a deep sense of accomplishment and pride as he was able to achieve his goal and his “dream.” He felt confident that he had made the right decision to come to the U.S. and was set on the path of prosperity for him and his family. He reevaluated his earlier plan to return back to India in five years and at this time decided to stay in the U.S.:

“You know, in five years I decided that if I go to India, I have to work in a company and since I was working in a company here and there was no problem with the job there was no use starting over in India. Very good decision to stay in this country, in the U.S., you know. I feel pretty good that my dream…I accomplished all that.”

A. joined Mahesh in the U.S. in 1968 and they had their first son. After living in rented apartments for a few years, Mahesh and A. decided to have their own home and found a plot of land on which they had it built. Their second son was born in that house. Mahesh worked for the same company until his retirement.

**Theme 3: Raising a family.** For A. first few years in the U.S. were challenging. According to Mahesh, she struggled with speaking English, but more importantly, there were no other Indian families in the area. A. felt so homesick, lonely, and sad that she wanted to return back to India. Not having a car and an Indian grocery store added to her isolation and homesickness. Mahesh found ways to help her by sending her to English classes and giving her support. Eventually, when they moved into their home, A. began to feel more confident with her English, and they met some Gujarati Indian families as a result of visiting an India grocery store in Pittsburgh, A.’s isolation decrease and she began to feel more ‘at home.’ Once Mahesh had a car, their social connection with the larger Gujarati and Jain community in Pittsburgh deepened.
and they became active participants in various social and religious activities. The building of the Jain/Hindu temple further expanded and enriched their social participation in the community.

Like many first-generation immigrant parents, it was important for Mahesh and A. to raise their children with Gujarati, Jain, and Indian values. This meant that both their children knew how to speak in Gujarati, were aware of the importance of being vegetarians as per the Jain law of non-violence and some basic Jain rituals, and importance of family and community relationships. At the same time, he was aware that his children were born and lived in two very different cultures simultaneously and that could be challenging to navigate for them. Mahesh adopts:

“Try to explain to them that “this is our culture, whether you take it or not is up to you.” There is no…nothing else to do. “Whatever you think is the best thing.” You have to accept that, you know. They responded well, you know. We told them that Jainism is our religion and we don’t eat any meat. All these things, mostly that and also eggs, we don’t eat. Similarly, they don’t eat if there is any fish oil. Purely vegetarian, you know. They felt, sometimes, you know, different way. But after that they accepted everything, that “we are Jains.”…We speak Gujarati at home with them and A. knows Gujarati very well and N. knows, but he cannot speak Guajarati that well. I am glad that they can understand.”

As a reader, I wondered if Mahesh also applied and extended the freedom he experienced in the U.S. and its culture himself as a parent when trying to figure out the right balance in raising his children. To a certain extent, giving a choice to his children regarding adoption of Indian values and traditions embodied this freedom.
Theme 4: Feeling at home. When Mahesh had just arrived in the U.S. and even after he had A. with him with their first son, he was uncertain about where he felt ‘at home,’ “I wasn’t sure you know, which to call home, U.S.A or India…,’ but once he decided to buy and build his own house, his uncertainty decreased and he began to think and feel ‘at home’ in Pittsburgh. Through his journey of immigration to the U.S., it appears that when Mahesh compares and contrasts his life in the U.S. and in India (what it was and what it could have been), it provides the most significant frame to understand his experience of ‘home’—for him the convenience and freedom that he has been afforded in the U.S. and which made the realization of his ‘dream’ of prosperity possible makes U.S. feel like his home:

“When I came to this country I was very energetic to know about this country and to study further and get educated and then after that, in the U.S.A, once I stayed in this country and got a job, I realized my dream. We decided that this is our home because of all these convenience and freedom. And all these activities we had. We consider this our home, United States. In this world, U.S. is the best place to stay here because you can manage income, expenses and everything and also you can raise your family and without any problems and you have all these opportunities to learn and make a…money. There is no limit on these things.”

Theme 5: Identity. Mahesh perceives and experiences himself as a Gujarati and an Indian in the U.S.—the centrality of family and community relationships and embodying Gujarati and Indian values and traditions is the framework that he utilizes to construct and live these identities:
“...but usually, you know I consider myself a Gujarati and an Indian. So, I spend my money wisely and not the American way and make sure my kids are happy and that about family that everything is good. That family is most important.”

The legal status of being an American citizen and the freedom of choice that has provided to Mahesh throughout his stay in the U.S. simultaneously provides another meaning-making frame to him. The same responsibility that he felt toward his family, he also feels toward the U.S. and it becomes the context for him to also “feel like an American”:

“To obey all the laws of this country and what it takes to help and support this country in whatever way I can, you know... (long pause) support it politically by my right to vote, being a citizen. Because I can express the freedom of my vote too, you know. The idea of freedom and choice, that was and is important to me. It is also the culture of this country... Because this is our country, you know. So, we have to support them either financially or any way we can support this country.”

Holistic Analysis of Form of Vijay’s and Mahesh’s Narratives

Due to considerable structural overlap between Vijay’s and Mahesh’s stories, I have decided to present their holistic analysis of form jointly. The overall plot structure of both my male participants’ narratives can be seen as organized around a ‘sink or swim’ strategy characterized by assumption of responsibility and steady progress after plunging into highly challenging and risky situation. For both participants this risky situation involves taking the chance of migrating to the U.S. in search of better professional and financial prospects for self and family. Thus, the professional axis emerges as central to each stage of the plot. In line with this, succeeding in getting a desirable job is presented as a significant turning point by both, Vijay and Mahesh. At times, each story appears to be governed solely by professional moves
such that the plot structure moves through a sharp ascent at the inception of a new professional phase, for example, acquiring a job, more moderate upward movement for a time, and then stability toward the conclusion of the plot, for example, each participant acknowledges, “That was my dream, I accomplished my goals.”

The significance of this axis, for both narratives, is also apparent from the amount of space devoted to it. Another significant axis for both plots is that of family issues and relationships. The experiences around these two axes dynamically interact to provide the framework for Vijay and Mahesh to understand and make sense of their identities as first-generation, Gujarati, Jain, Indian-Americans. The overall plot structure of both these stories highlights the risks taken and gains made by both participants.

Holistic Analysis of Form across Four Narratives

Analysis of Narrative as a Whole

When each narrative was read for its plot cohesiveness—whether it had the elements of a well-constructed narrative which includes a story, a clearly defined objective, a series of events that progress toward that objective, and relations of sequence and causality among those events (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998), a common structure of progression emerged across all four participants which comprised of—i) Before the journey ii) Preparing for the journey iii) Arrival in the U.S. and early challenges iv) Journey of making home/finding job v) Journey of building family and community. Although I noticed a clear progression through events toward a clear objective (like stages), the common ‘goal’ was neither assimilation nor acculturation as presented in majority of empirical literature reviewed in Chapter two.

Before the journey and preparing for the journey. In terms of progression of the plot during this stage, there was one significant difference between female and male participants. For
both female participants, the progression of the plot was relatively stable with the plot being steady, organized around living with extended family members following marriage and grappling with the uncertainty of their spouses leaving for the U.S. In contrast, the plot progression for male participants is somewhat progressive, advancing the story forward through its organization around the challenge of making the decision to take the risk of migrating to the U.S.

The plot structure for all four participants at the stage of ‘Preparing for the Journey’ was characterized by a tendency for movement and the direction of movement was shaped by the experience of leaving family and home and contradictory emotions such as excitement, adventurousness, worry, and sadness. Similar to the plot structure of the previous stage, the progression for all four plots was progressive, where the plot continues to advance steadily.

**Journey of arrival in the U.S. and early challenges.** For all four participants, with the exception of Pradina, the early period of arrival in the U.S. was structurally quite similar. In terms of both the content and the direction, the plot was a combination of regressive and progressive movement (progression) marked first by descent and decline resulting from an encounter with number of challenges, followed by ascent as those challenges are overcome. The exception to this pattern was Pradina whose plot structure for this period continued to be stable, continuing from the previous stage.

**Journey of making home/finding job.** The transition from early period of challenges in the U.S. to that of settling down in terms of home and job was universally experienced as a turning point. The movement and direction of movement continued from the previous stage, which was characterized by a slow ascent in a progressive direction. For all four participants, the turning points, whether in terms of moving into one’s own home or finding a job (fulfillment of
‘dream’) was, simultaneously experienced as turning points that began to give shape to emerging sense of feeling at home and identity construction.

**Journey of building family and community.** On the whole, this stage appeared to be more salient to two female participants as each devoted the largest amount of space in their narratives to their experience of raising children and building relationships with larger Gujarati, Jain community. The plot structure during this stage, for all four participants, highlighted a steady progression around participants’ steady growth, stability, and an overall positive tone.
CHAPTER FIVE—DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction to this study, it was designed in and carried out with the hope of making three contributions. First, to witness and present the stories of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians in the U.S. and illuminate, by doing so, their lived experiences. Second, I hoped to chart their identititary journey by exploring how they negotiated, resisted, accepted, questioned, and changed meanings of identity and selfhood over time in the context of migration, culture, and language. Finally, I hoped to explore how these stories of immigration to the U.S. might differ (or not) from existing theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon.

The first section of this discussion, in which I explore the contributions of the study, is dedicated to the first two goals mentioned above. In this section, I discuss several findings that have the potential to contribute to the understanding of first-generation Gujarati Asian immigrant experience in particular and psychological research on migration and its interaction with identity construction of immigrants in general. In doing so, I explore the following research questions proposed in Chapter One:

1. What is the meaning of migration in the lives of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians and how do they perceive, make sense of, and respond to their immigrant experience?

2. How does the experience of immigration structure and maintain Gujarati Asian Indian identity and what meaning-making processes are emphasized in the stories of their identity construction and personhood?

The second section is devoted to the goal of exploring the intersections of participants’ lived experiences of immigration with theoretical descriptions of the phenomena existing in the research literature. In this section, I will situate and examine the findings of the study with and against the main discourses of migrant experiences that dominate the existing literature—models
of acculturation, acculturative stress and its impact on mental health, and notions of identity and culture. In addition, I will address several limitations of the study and will offer brief recommendations for future research.

The previous chapter highlighted the analyses of form and content. With respect to form, we learned that all four participants organized their narratives in a sequential plot consisting of these stages: i) Before the journey ii) Preparing for the journey iii) Arrival in the US and early challenges iv) Journey of making home/finding job and v) Journey of building family and community. With respect to the analyses of content, some of the themes that were identified included ‘feeling at home,’ ‘who am I?’ ‘should we stay or should we go?’, “raising a family”, and “experiences of ‘otherness.”’ These themes are now subjected to a closer reading and as they pertain to the goals and objective of the study.

**Contributions of the Present Study to Migration and Identity Literature: Selected Thematic Findings**

**Being and Feeling at Home**

One of the significant findings of the study was the emergence of a complex and dialectical notion of ‘home’ in and through all four participants’ stories. Migration was the background against which each participant attempted to construct and understand meanings of ‘home.’ This illuminated a “dialec tic of ‘home’ and migration” in each participant’s story. The mode of dialectics here entails home and non-home, rupture and continuity, novelty and everydayness, changing and remaining. The movement away from home thus simultaneously becomes enabling and constraining; a threat and a promise, and a painful, yet possibly exhilarating experience (Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012, p.732).
Jigna, Vijay, and Mahesh initially experience migration to the U.S.—a movement away from a physical location they had come to experience as ‘home’ in Mumbai as a painful loss and rupture. The rupture related to losing their sense of rootedness that resulted from having a home as a secure center through which they kept themselves oriented in particular space and time. The migration came with the loss of senses of comfort, security, and privacy. There was also a threat of the unknown and the unfamiliar, as well as feelings of isolation and loneliness. For Jigna and Pradina, this same moment of threat also embodied the promise of joining their husbands. For all participants it carried the possibility of self-continuity in a new place, becoming an exciting and exhilarating experience. Particularly for Vijay and Mahesh, their sense of rupture was mediated by the goal of finding better employment and the imagined future of financial prosperity, thus opening up the prospect of transformation and re-invention. The first few years in the U.S. for Pradina and Mahesh are especially emblematic of the dialectic of staying and returning home as they hold the desire to stay in the U.S. but eventually return, in tension. One can argue that, for all participants, home was intimate and safe, but also known and unexciting. Migration to the U.S. was a promise, but also a threat. Participants tried to understand this double bind within the dialectics of home and migration.

One can see how the participants’ way of being in the U.S. immediately following their movement away from home activates the dialectic of home and non-home as these become simultaneously present and absent in their way of being in the new context of the U.S. and coping with new challenges, such as language, food, and attire. On the one hand, all four participants are physically away from home, cut out from all that was familiar, mundane, and safe. Yet, through that absence, they realize what it meant to be at-home, the sense of home becomes very much present in the new context and becomes a powerful reference point and a
lens for all four participants through which all future meanings of home are constructed and lived. For all participants, this was the first instance of experiencing a sense of being in between, in transition, not anymore there, but also not yet here. It was characterized by feelings of liminality, ambiguity, and ambivalence.

The dialectic of home, for all four participants, changes again with the turning point of establishing a physical ‘home’ in the U.S. This marks the return to a sense of rootedness and having a secure center. For Jigna, the physical boundaries of her home offer privacy and protection from the gaze of the other—American landlords who refused to rent them apartments as a result of being a “foreigner,” an “outsider.” Feeling of home, for her, also comes with feeling of freedom. The meaning of ‘home’ is now understood by participants within the dialectical movement from rupture to continuity and from novelty to sameness or everydayness. Participants highlighted various ways in which they carried out the work of establishing and maintaining continuity and sameness. These included maintaining routines of everyday life like shopping for Indian groceries and cooking Indian food, wearing traditional Indian dress, watching Hindi Bolloywood films, and decorating the home with Indian artifacts. The most important strategy employed by all participants to maintain a sense of continuity was speaking Gujarati at home and complying with traditional, familiar, cultural and religious values. For example, all four participants sent their children to the Sunday school to teach them Gujarati. Pradina insisted that her children write a paragraph each in Gujarati, in letters she wrote to family members in India while Jigna insisted on serving food to both her sons and later to her daughter-in-law only if they asked for it in Gujarati. Participants insisted that cooking and eating only vegetarian food at home and outside, even for their children, was an important cultural and religious way of continuing Gujarati, Jain ways of being. Transmission of Gujarati, Indian
values, morals, and traditions to their children emerged as another significant pathway to reestablish and maintain continuity with a notion of home from the past.

The promise and the possibility (change and novelty, in other words) for transformation and reinvention, against the background of sameness and continuity enable participants to widen their experience of being at home in the U.S. as a country. Mahesh and Vijay identify and utilize the abundance and comfort of material things and services, freedom of choice, immense opportunity for financial gains, and “humanity of people” as contributing to their feeling at home in the U.S. Once again, this construction of home is achieved through a rhetorical ‘return home’—by pointing out the past and present harshness of living in India with its rampant corruption, lack of social services, and “too many people and too dirty.”

All four participants discussed how they maintain connection with family and friends in India through letters, phone calls, and periodic visits home. They take advantage of recent advances in communication technologies through the internet, such as, Skype, FaceTime, email, etc., to increase the ease and speed with which to bolster ties with family and friends in India. Although all these means of connection foster and sustain sameness, continuity, and everydayness necessary to feel at ‘home’ in the U.S., they also serve in intensifying feelings of homesickness and nostalgia for India (now a ‘non-home,’ idealized ‘home,’ or imagined ‘home’). On her visits to Mumbai, Jigna “forgets all the bad things” and “remembers all the memories” from her childhood. She likes to visit old friends and old places she used to love when she lived in India. Vijay, when home, enjoys the “five-star treatment” given to him by his extended family and the variety of food in Mumbai. For Pradina, it is the participation in Jain religious pilgrimages and other rituals and seeing her maternal family that is particularly ‘home-like.’ Thus, using, what Boym (2007) has termed, ‘restorative nostalgia,’ which stresses “nostos”
(home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home, thus focusing on the past, all four participants enacted an imagined ‘return’ home. This dialectic mode enabled each participant to simultaneously experience ‘being at-home’ in the U.S. and India.

Most importantly, all participants privileged their meaningful and emotionally based everyday interactions and relationships with others, and thus emphasized a relational, interpersonal meaning of home. This was true for their home in the U.S. as well as for ‘feeling at home’ in India. Relationships with children and grandchildren and ties of long-lasting friendships nurtured over the years with the larger Gujarati community came to embody ‘feeling and being at home.’ As a node in network of social relations, home was experienced through relationships with others from this and previous generations, with old and new social others, functioning as a bridge between past, present and future, thus giving them continuity in time and space (Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012, p.731).

The participants in my study referred to home as physical, relational, and psychological space. For the participants home was one physical location, i.e., home in the U.S. and America (the country) but it also came into being through each participant’s lived experiences and relationships, desires, and fantasy. The Indian participants use the space of home or the inside/private culture as a site to imagine Indian culture and to perform and enact the identity of being Indian with other family and community members. The complex and multilayered process of creating Indian culture included practicing aspects of the home culture such as celebrating religious prayers and rituals, watching Bollywood and Hindi films, and participating in other social and cultural practices. Bhatia (2007) points out that the community events are imagined, recreated, and personalized in the home space in order to activate old memories and to show affiliation and identification with Indian culture. Such enactments and performances play an
important role in constructing an agentive, dialogical self that moves between the distinct culture space of home and the outside space of whiteness or American culture (p. 223). To the participants in my study, home meant a bricolage of various experiences within and in relation to a variety of home-places involving several significant others. This experiential sense of being at home involved bodily, spatial, kinesthetic, sensual, emotional, rational, and interpersonal qualities. An example of this was the fragrance of spices, viewing of Indian artifacts, and photos of family members at Jigna’s home immediately transporting me to memories of my own home in India. Thus, in the context of the dialectic of home and migration, participants constructed complex yet ambivalent, multiple yet liminal notions of home.

**Home and Identity**

The notion of ‘home’ that emerged for participants within the dialectic of migration was expanded to explore how it shaped and maintained their sense of identity. In other words, this finding illuminated how sense of being at home, for all four participants, was intertwined with their sense of identity. In and through my participants stories, home emerged as a personally relevant and significant place. Based on their notions of home, one can argue that home was experienced as an extension of self, to be ‘home’ involved knowing where and who you were and being oriented in space and time. This gave their notion of home an identity-giving quality. For example, acquiring and inhabiting one’s own home was a turning point not only for the reasons of feeling at home for the first time in the U.S., but also for the beginning of questioning and negotiating how one experienced one’s sense of self.

Once again foregrounding the dialectic of migration (movement away from home) which simultaneously entails home and non-home, rupture and continuity, novelty and everydayness, changing and remaining, threat and promise, facilitates the exploration of how it structures
participants’ sense of self. For example, the rupture of migration concurrently provokes questions about one’s sense of identity as it is intertwined with the sense of being at-home. For Jigna, the rupture that resulted from migration was an all-encompassing feeling that one’s normal way of being no longer “flowed” in the new context as a result of her struggles with identity-giving lived experiences of language and food. Migration introduces a disruption in physical environment, self-understandings, values, practices, and social relations. All these elements as an intertwined whole become broken as one encounters the strangeness of the new physical and social environment (Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012, p.733). Jigna feared loss of Gujarati, her “mother tongue,” in her initial years of isolation in the U.S. (threat related to movement away from home) and through that her Gujarati identity. In the same vein, not having access to Indian groceries made it difficult for her to feel at home, but also brought a fear of losing one significant mediator of Gujarati and Jain identity. For Vijay and Mahesh, the gender role reversal that resulted following the movement away from home—learning to cook, clean, shop groceries, and maintain home demanded a renegotiation of their traditional Gujarati, Indian male identities as these tasks were primarily carried out by the female members of their respective families in India. Mahesh’s observation—“I went from being married to being (a) bachelor,” encapsulates this questioning and renegotiation of identity. Movement of rupture and change dialectically communicated with the promise of novelty, transformation, and reinvention of their sense of personhood for all four participants. If Jigna feared for and struggled to maintain her identity as a Gujarati as a result of loss of Gujarati, she first improvised and then learnt to communicate with Americans in usual and unusual ways, such as taking English classes and watching Sesame street (a children’s program) on television. This opened up the possibility of simultaneously inhabiting two languages, and therefore, a more complicated and nuanced sense of self. The moment of
acquiring jobs for Vijay and Mahesh, a moment of re-invention, also prompted the first instance of ‘toying’ with the notion of ‘being American’ along with feeling at home. Each participant’s migration inaugurated multiple moments that called upon them to wrestle with questions of selfhood. The feelings of liminality and ambivalence that each participant experienced during their first years of struggle in the U.S. opened up a space of in-betweenness—a space where everything was possible and where they could experiment with different ways of being.

In participants’ efforts to establish continuity, sameness, and everydayness so as to feel at home in the U.S., the strategy most desired was maintenance and transmission of Gujarati, Jain, and Indian cultural and religious values, morals, traditions, and language. This was accomplished through modes of dress (sari), food (Indian and vegetarian), speaking in Gujarati with family and friends, celebration of Jain and Indian festivals and rituals with the Gujarati community via Jain/Hindu temple, and transmission of ‘Indian culture’ and Gujarati language to their children. One can argue that the desire for sameness in terms of what Jigna names Gujarati and Indian cultural ‘sanskar,’ was the most useful means of constructing and articulating an identity where each participant felt most ‘at home’—For Jigna and Mahesh it is “Gujarati Jain and Indian’ and for Pradina and Vijay it is ‘Indian.’ The identity as an Indian, for all participants, is enacted by actual and imagined return home. One is ‘Indian’ because that’s where one is from and this rootedness is kept alive through nostalgia and idealization of Indian cultural values.

**Relational and Dialogic Identities**

Indian immigrants of this study both displayed and resisted certain forms of identity to define their sense of “who they are” in the United States. All participants privileged a relational, interpersonal meaning of home based on their relationships with new and old social others. This privileging of the relational in the experience of home also illuminated their articulation of
selfhood. Identities are constructed and constantly renegotiated through encounters with others. When Jigna struggled with communicating with other Americans upon her arrival in the U.S., these encounters with others added additional feelings of threat and fear in her sense of identity. She recalled being “afraid. I don’t know what I was gonna do.” The world now became alien to her and her pre-established sense of identity was shaken because she no longer received the recognition and acknowledgement she was used to getting from others in India, other Indians who looked like her and other Gujaratis who spoke the same language as her. Her increased isolation gave rise to dialectical moments where she felt that the environment was unfamiliar and instead of recognizing her, it rejected and excluded her. This exclusion alienated her sense of self, prompting a sense of ambivalence and ambiguity about her Gujarati identity, unmooring it from its previous anchorage.

Encounters with new social others, identifying and being identified by them is central in the process of renegotiating one’s sense of identity, and re-establishing familiarity after migration. This occurred for Pradina again and again when she encountered very friendly and supportive American neighbors everywhere she lived. These new others gave her confidence and encouragement to work outside of the home, prompting her to ‘stretch’ her established identities of a Gujarati, Indian, wife and mother to accommodate ‘working Gujarati, Indian, wife and mother.’ Through the eyes of other Americans she came to perceive herself positively and consequently her perception of Americans (American identity) also came to be as helpful, friendly, and tolerant.

Participants strove to understand who the Americans were (what are their values, their customs?) when they first came to the U.S. and also got a sense of who they were through the encounters they had (How do they see me? Who do they think I am?). This speaks of the
dialectical emergence of identity for participants out of their perception of others’ perception of them. For example, when articulating her lived experience of personhood or identity, Pradina asserts,

“It would be apparent to them, they would know (who I am) right away that you are Asian, you are an Indian. I mean, nobody asks you that at least… From the color of our skin, (In Gujarati) our dressing…you don’t wear pants everywhere. They know, I mean. They know.”

Here, Pradina imagines how she is perceived by ‘them’, in this case Americans, based on the color of her skin and dress, which then allows her to construct her own sense of self—Indian. It’s as if she is ventriloquizing the voice of an American other. This voice, in turn, dialogues with another voice, that of the first-generation Gujarati Asian Indian immigrant. Now let’s consider the further elaboration she provides of her experience of identity:

“Well, divisions come about. Now, if you go somewhere and four South Indians are there and even if you are sitting there, they will talk in their own language. It automatically comes that…not that they want to insult you or anything, but naturally comes. If there is one Gujarati and one South Indian, you know that she does not know Gujarati, she might not understand. You try to speak in English too… Of course (I am) an Indian. (Being an) Indian comes everywhere, but if you are with other Gujaratis, (for example, you are at a) Gujarati Samaj dinner or at a Gujarati play or at Garba for Navratri, then you are Gujarati. But now other people come even (for those Gujarati occasions). Everything is mixed now.”

In this elaboration of her identity, Pradina is now able to occupy multiple I positions simultaneously, that of an imagined American, other ethnic Indians (south Indian), other
Gujaratis and her own, giving rise to a highly complex, polyphonic identity. A similar navigation is undertaken by Vijay when he contends that he is not an American because he is not born and raised here. Moreover, temporarily occupying the I position of an American he insists that he is not American also because he did not participate in any of the past American military drafts in the late 1960s, thus not doing what other Americans have done. Once again shifting his I position to that of an immigrant he contends that he is an American through his citizenship. For him, being born and raised in India makes him an ‘Indian.’ Here, like Pradina, Vijay allows the imagined voice of an American to speak through him so as to be able to contrast it with another voice of an immigrant from India to constitute his sense of self. In this mode of identity construction, Bhatia (2007), adopting from Hermans, Kempen, and van Loon (1992), claims that immigration is experienced in dialogical terms, a process involving a back-and-forth movement between different voices. (e.g. ‘I face racism in the U.S., but this economy give me money to support my family,” or e.g., ‘There are too many political and economic problems back home, but the U.S. economy is stable so it is okay to face racism here’). Hermans et. al. (1992) call this polyphony of voices a movement between a ‘multiplicity of I positions.’ p.63

This dialogical model, thus, can illustrate how negotiating one’s migrant self involves multiple mediations with political and historical practices that are linked to and shaped by voices of race, culture, history, and power (Bhatia, 2007). In other words, the self is conceived “in terms of a number of dynamic but relatively autonomous I positions that are in dialogue with both real, actual, and imagined others. The I is not static, but can move from one position to another with changes in time and circumstances” (Hermans, Kampen & van Loon, 1992, p. 28-29). The voice assumes an embodied actor located in space acting and coordinating with other actors. Similarly,
a position is always located in either relation or opposition to other positions. Within any
dialogical self, some voices can be temporary and others can occupy a more permanent space.
Bhatia (2007) finds the theory of ‘dialogic self’ useful because the multiplicity and dynamically
shifting I meanings can capture different kinds of dialogical negotiations one has to undertake in
the wake of departure, dislocation, and movement from being on a familiar territory to being a
stranger and a foreigner in a distant location (p.64).

In their definition of “transnationalism,” Portes (1996) and Glick Schiller, Basch, &
Blanc-Szanton (1995) emphasize “that many immigrants today build social fields that cross
geographic, cultural, and political borders…. An essential element is the multiplicity of
involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies.” (p.6) For all four
participants of this study, communication between American and Indian cultures was established
and actively maintained via media and technology (Skype, FaceTime, e-mail etc.) and through
affiliation to Indian culture via participation in Indian cultural and religious activities, watching
Bollywood films, language, dietary restrictions, and mode of dress. They also shared the
importance of real and imagined return ‘home’ to India. One can argue that through these ‘trans-
nationalist’ processes, study participants forged and sustained multi-stranded social relations that
linked together not only their American and Indian societies, but also enabled them to inhabit
and maintain fluid and multiple identities.

The manner in which participants of this study carry out the work of identity construction
and maintenance demonstrate, as Thapan (2005) argues, that notions of identity are critical to
processes of transnational crossings, backwards and forwards, and ongoing and continuous
giving rise to highly complex, negotiated, fluid, and polyphonic sense of self.
Identity and Otherness

Participants used the occasion to narrate their stories of migration to articulate, either explicitly or implicitly, experiences where they felt ‘othered’ and ‘different.’ The theory of ‘dialogic self’ is particularly useful in understanding these participants’ experiences where they felt that they occupied position of an ‘outsider,’ ‘foreigner,’ and ‘other’ and its impact on their sense of self.

Jigna and Pradina shared experiences of what Bhatia (2007) terms “assignation of generic otherness” (p.118). Generic otherness occurs when the outside voices or voices of others focus on “the display of cultural differences such as saris or the bindi or through skin color and nonverbal behavior. Cultural differences in this type of otherness are highlighted in general terms by commenting about a particular cultural artifact.” (p.118) Jigna narrates an experience where an American commented on her sari, “beautiful dress.” In this dialogical construction of otherness, difference is accentuated by Jigna being implicitly labeled as exotic or just different. She reinterprets this voice as praise and experiences it as curiosity on the part of the other. In contrast to this experience, when she and her husband are denied apartments for rent based on the color of her skin, her ‘foreignness,’ Jigna refuses to reinterpret that voice of the other simply as a mistake or a choice, but names it as discrimination and oppressive.

On the other hand, in her efforts to get out of paying a parking ticket, she strategically turns generic otherness on its head by positioning herself as a “foreigner” using the cultural artifact of her sari and inability to speak English. She now inhabits the imagined voice of the other, in this case, the American traffic police in order to position herself as a ‘foreigner,’ while the sari allows her to have the voice and position of an Indian woman, giving her a sense of agency and power in a powerless and possibly oppressive situation. Pradina privileges the voice
of American by insisting that she would always be perceived as ‘Indian’ based on the color of her skin by other Americans. In these experiences of otherness through assignment of generic otherness, race and ethnicity mediates both my participants’ sense of self, at times restricting while at other times, empowering to inhabit multiple, polyphonic identities.

Although generic otherness was ascribed to participants in my study, they also used it strategically and ascribed certain properties of otherness to Americans, describing them as having “humanity,” “less corrupt,” “professional,” “too independent,” “drink alcohol and smoke,” “self-centered,” and “materialistic.” Such assignations of otherness were especially evident when Jigna and Pradina reflected on their sons’ decision to marry a non-Indian, white American woman. Their significant anxiety, anger, and worry were indirectly related to the ascription of generic assignation through extreme contrast in cultural practices of food and language. In this case, these American women were perceived as ‘other.’

At a dialogic level the severity of panic and anger that Jigna felt regarding her son’s decision also demonstrated her fear of being perceived as an ‘outsider’ and a ‘foreigner’ as she realized the possibility that she might not be able to understand and fit into her culture just as she worried about her (daughter-in-law) not accepting Gujarati and Indian cultural customs and values. According to Bhatia (2007), this is an occurrence of “marked otherness” (p.126). The “I” positions of marked otherness are co-constructed by the person assigning the differences and the person receiving their assigned meanings. This type of otherness and difference is co-constructed because the theme of otherness is supplied by the person doing the assigning and the assignee reinterprets the theme, label, or mark through his or her own personal autobiography, lived experiences, and cultural location. Mahesh indirectly reinterprets the discourse of ‘model minority’ when he constructs his identity as an Indian immigrant in the U.S. who “works hard
and saves money” and appreciates and is grateful for the freedom of choice, material abundance, and financial prosperity that the U.S. has afforded him in spite of being an ‘outsider’ and a ‘foreigner’, based on the accomplishment of his “dream.”

In my participants’ narratives, cultural markers such as dress, physical appearance, and language become the basis on which the story of difference and foreignness is formulated. These elaborate stories about otherness are part of the dialogical exchange between “self” and “other” and “us” and “them.” The instances of generic and marked otherness also raise questions about issues of belonging and home, as these markers of otherness undermine my participants’ notions of belonging and prompt an ongoing negotiation of identity.

Dialogue between Cross-Cultural Empirical Research on Acculturation, Migration, and Identity and Findings of the Study

In this section I situate and examine the findings of the study with and against the main discourses of migrant experiences that dominate the existing literature discussed in Chapter Two—models of acculturation and assimilation, acculturative stress and its impact on mental health, and notions of identity and culture.

Assimilation, Acculturation, and Acculturative Stress

To recall, within the field of cross-cultural psychology, more recently, ‘acculturation’ has emerged as the predominant model of understanding migration (Berry, 1990; Berry, Triamble, & Olmedo, 1986; Olmedo, 1979; Krishnan & Berry, 1992). Berry defines acculturation as follows: “the term psychological acculturation refers to the process by which individuals change, both by being influenced by contact with other culture and by being participants in the general acculturative changes under way in their own culture” (Berry, 1990, p. 210).
Berry (1997) has proposed a bi-dimensional model of acculturation where the individual develops relationships with both the heritage- as well as the host culture. He has posited four acculturation strategies. These are: assimilation (loss of heritage culture and adoption of dominant culture), integration (adopting aspects of both cultures), separation (retaining heritage culture and eschewing values of host culture) and marginalization (confusion and marginalization from both cultures). One of the underlying assumptions of this model is that it privileges integration as an end goal and an ideal strategy for the process of acculturation. Those immigrants who do not achieve the goal of integration, experience acculturative stress and/or are not as physically or psychologically healthy. Acculturative stress, according to Al-Issa (1997), “affects both physical and mental health and may be related to poor adaptation” (p.13-16).

Immigrants experience acculturative stress as a result of loss of resources, lifestyle changes, language difficulties, a shift in ideas, and life systems, and social environments. The discourse of acculturation suggests that the cross-cultural adjustment is stressful, and that such stress is both problematic and challenge-inducing.

The participants of my study articulate experiences that are considered as sources of acculturative stress for immigrants, namely, linguistic challenges, difficulty in obtaining Indian species and other food material, loss and mourning of family at home and challenges in establishing new social relationships with other Gujaratis and Indians in the U.S., and transportation problems. The emotional states described by participants included worry, loneliness, homesickness, and isolation, but none of the participants experienced these as “poor adaptation.” Moreover, the emotional distress resulting from migration, a loss of home and familiarity was not experienced as a disease or pathology by any of the participants. The rupture that participants underwent as a result of movement away from home did not emerge as
maladaptation, directly in participant narratives or the themes derived as a result of holistic content and form analysis. Based on the findings of the study one can argue that, for participants in this study, feelings of alienation and isolation were a result of a change in context and of cultural strangeness, unfamiliarity, and unpredictability more than migration itself. These feelings also started to diminish once participants became familiar with the new environment. In this sense, acculturative stress represented the less significant and less enduring aspects of being a stranger, while the more significant and serious “stress” resulting from being a new migrant were indeed those of self-discovery, where the participants’ previously established values and beliefs about the world and oneself were challenged. Those sudden, unforeseen experiences and revelations were much more impactful and lasting for each participant in terms of notions of home and identity compared to stress.

The discourse of acculturation privileges integration and assimilation as an end goal and the only healthy strategy for an immigrant is acculturation and that it’s universal irrespective of the migrant group or their circumstance of immigration. It is evident that assimilation as the final goal is completely absent from all of my participants’ narrative. The thematic results of the narratives of the participants do highlight a painful and disorienting migration experience but the underlying universalist assumption of the discourse of acculturation is not supported. In other words, none of the Gujarati Asian Indians suggested, through their narratives, that assimilation or integration was a solution to their feelings of loss, disorientation, and isolation. In fact, one can observe from the thematic results of being and feeling at home, identity construction, and experiences of cultural otherness that participants used myriad of strategies, including those of separation and marginalization, as demanded by their immigrant experiences at various times and place and in relation to multiple others.
The narratives analyzed show that for all participants, their negotiation with multiple cultural sites was fluid, dynamic, interminable and often unstable. At times, achieving integration was simply not an option or was achieved temporarily only to be lost at some point and so on. The findings highlighted that the acculturation journey is not a teleological trajectory that has a fixed-end point but instead has to be continuously negotiated. In the context of the majority, cross-cultural empirical discourse on acculturation, what the findings of this study suggest is that it is a process that involves continuous, contested, negotiations that will forever be in progress as an immigrant grapples with his/her place in the larger structures of the history, culture, and politics.
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December 3, 2012

Re: Exploring the meanings of identity, selfhood, and migration in the lives of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians: A narrative study – (PROTOCOL # 12-158)

Dr. Leswin Laubscher  
Department of Psychology  
Duquesne University  
Pittsburgh PA 15282

Dear Dr. Laubscher,

Thank you for submitting the research proposal of you and your student Reena Sheth to the Institutional Review Board at Duquesne University.

Based on the review of IRB representative Dr. Matthew Schneirov and my own review, I have determined that your research proposal is consistent with the requirements of the appropriate sections of the 45-Code of Federal Regulations-46, known as the federal Common Rule. The intended research poses no greater than minimal risk to human subjects. Consequently, the research is approved under 45CFR46.101 and 46.111 on an expedited basis under 45CFR46.110.

The consent form is attached, stamped with IRB approval and expiration date. You should use the stamped forms as the original for copies you display or distribute.
The approval pertains to the submitted protocol. If you or Reena wish to make changes to the research, you must first submit an amendment and receive approval from this office. In addition, if any unanticipated problems arise in reference to human subjects, you should notify the IRB chair before proceeding. In all correspondence, please refer to the protocol number shown after the title above.

Once the study is complete, please provide our office with a short summary (one page) of your results for our records.

Thank you for contributing to Duquesne’s research endeavors.

Sincerely yours,
Joseph Kush
Joseph C. Kush, Ph.D.

C: Dr. Matthew Schneirov
IRB Records
Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Exploring the meanings of identity, selfhood, and migration in the lives of first-generation Gujarati Asian Indians: A narrative study

INVESTIGATOR: Reena Sheth, 4910 Centre Ave., Apt L7, Pittsburgh, PA, 15213, 847-219-0267

ADVISOR: Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Psychology
Ph. # 412.396.1843, E-mail: laubscher@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project which is for the purposes of my doctoral dissertation. This student research seeks to generate and explore narratives or stories of your experience of immigrating to the United States from India and living in the United States as a Gujarati Asian Indian since your time of arrival. It also hopes to explore how your experience of being in the US has changed since the time of your first arrival here, specifically as it relates to how you see yourself or your identity.

You are requested to participate in a face-to-face interview whereby the investigators of this study (Reena Sheth) will first collect demographic information from you and will ask a series of open-ended questions based on the purpose of this study stated above. If needed, you will also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview.
The in-person interview will be tape-recorded and I will transcribe it verbatim. These interview transcripts will be used as data for this research project. The interview will be digitally recorded only after you have provided me with your written consent to do so. You are under no obligation to give consent to record the interview. If this is the case, you will no longer be able to participate in the study.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**YOUR PARTICIPATION:**
You are requested to participate in a face-to-face interview conducted by this study’s investigator, Reena Sheth (me). This interview is expected to last between 60-90 minutes and will be carried out at a location most convenient to you, such as your home. The location and exact time (day/date) of this interview will be decided prior to the interview in collaboration with you.

During the interview, you will be first asked some concrete questions that hope to gather specific information regarding your age, occupation status, marital status, number of years of residency in the US, numbers of family members, etc. These initial questions will be followed by a series of more general and broad questions related specifically to the purpose of this study stated above, such as your own experience of living in the US since immigrating here.

You will also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview after the initial interview, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes in order to further clarify, expand, and/or change any of the information shared during the initial interview. This follow-up interview will also give you an opportunity to ask this investigator any questions or concerns you may have.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**
There are no known risks beyond those of everyday life.

**COMPENSATION:**
No form of compensation of any kind (monetary or otherwise) will be provided for your participation in this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**
When tape-recorded interview/s will be transcribed, all identifying information, such as your name, location,
professional designation, will be removed. Your name or any other identifying information will never appear in any presentation of the research data or results. Similarly, any identifying details such as name of any other person/s you mention in your interview will never appear on any interview transcripts or presentation of the research data or results. All research material, including digitally copies of the same, will be destroyed after three years of their initial gathering.

I will generate a ‘pseudo name’ in collaboration with you in order to protect your confidentiality and to use it in transcription of interview and presentation of results. All written and recorded materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file cabinet in this student-researcher's home office. All digital files of the research material, including interview transcripts will be password protected. Only this researcher (Reena Sheth) will have access to this file cabinet. Your responses will only appear in statistical or qualitative data summaries.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**
You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time, for any reason without any negative consequences. You will not need to inform me in writing of your withdrawal of consent to participate in this research project. Your withdrawal of the consent to participate will also apply to all the data (interview material) collected prior that time.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**
A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**
I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call
i) Reena Sheth, primary investigator of this study at reenasheth@hotmail.com (847-219-0267)
ii) Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D., Advisor of this dissertation committee at 412.396.1843, laubscher@duq.edu
iii) Dr. Matthew Schneirov, IRB Representative, 412.396.6494 schneirov@duq.edu

Participant's Signature  
Date

Researcher's Signature  
Date
Appendix C: Transcriptions of Participant Interviews

Participant One: Jigna

Reena (R): Let's begin. Tell me your full name.

Jigna (J).

R: And what's your age?

J: 69

R: ok, and tell me about your education

J.: I received all my education in India. I passed high-school and got trained as a Montessori teacher and I also trained for a year as a musician, in Gandharva sangeet style.

R: Ok, and tell me about what you do, your occupation.

J: Housewife

R: Alright, and you are married and you have two sons and a daughter-in-law?

J: Yes

R: Ok, and you are a US citizen. In what year did you come to the US for the first time from India?

J: 1968

R: O.k. I will stop and check the audio recording to see if it is recording properly.

R: J., where should we begin, how about if we start with when you were in India. How did you decide to come to the US

J: Because my husband was here, so, I (was) excited to come here. (pause). I was sad about leaving India, because of relatives.

R: Ok, so how long were you married when he came here?

J: We got married in 1965, after two years, almost two years I came.

R: So, you came almost after two years. So….you…

R: In Mumbai?

J: Most of the time and I visit my mom’s house often.

R: So, when did you find out that H. was going to come to the US and how?

J: We were engaged, before that engage interview, he told me that “I may go to Jmerica, for further study.”

R: So, you were not yet married, but the talks were on for marriage. Jt that time, he told you that he…

J: Yeha, he may have to go. Jt that time I said “that’s fine.”

R: How did you feel that he might go so far away, to Jmerica?

J: I feel just for further study, maybe it’s a good opportunity for him, so I don’t want to say “no”.

R: Did you have mixed feelings? Did you think or feel… so far away, how it how it will go…so far away?

J: No.

R: You felt since it would be a good opportunity…

J: Yes, right.

R: How did you feel…you were not even married at that time that he might go to the US?

J: I asked my parents. They advised me, “that’s the better thing if he goes there for further studies.”

R: Better in terms of what? Better, how? Your parents told you that it would be better, if he goes. In what way or why do you think they felt that way, that it would be better?

J: If he goes for study and everything, they think (that) he gonna make it.

R: So, opportunity wise.

J: Yes, opportunity wise…

R: hmmmm. ..

J: And he so insist that I want to go if I get chance to further study.

R: And did you think about the idea about….being married to someone who could go to US?

J: That time parents say, “nice family, educated boy.” I said, “that’s fine then.”
R: Because at that time….you must tell me if I am wrong. At that time not so many people (from India) came to the US compared to now. It must be unusual.

J: Yes, it was unusual, but at that time we always listened to our parents.

R: Hmmm…right

J: Without any….any arguments or aana kani, I said “yes.”

R: No problem, there is little risk, but it would be alright. So, before marriage you had some idea that he might go… So, you got engaged and then got married?

J: Yes

R: How many years after your marriage to him you decide or realize that he was ready to leave for the US?

J: After nine months, after nine months he came here.

R: So, those nine months … after your marriage and the time that he came here, how was that period for you?

J: That was little worrying me (pause)

R: You were worried.

J: Yeha, cause he was gonna go by himself and I was worried if he was gonna be alright, stuff like that.

R: Oh, ok. It appears that from the very beginning, you were supportive (of his decision/plan to come to the US).

J: Yes, I was supportive, (but) when time comes, I was little worried.

R: So, you were anxious, how everything will be done?

How it could be, everything could be a success.

R: Because, he was going to be so far away?

J: Yes,

R: In your decision which were some other factors were involved…in making that decision, for both of you?

J: Well, there weren’t a whole lot of factors to consider…(at that time) you just did as your elders (parents) told you and you said “yes.”

R: Ok. So did you feel at that time that this was a big risk, that you were taking a big step?

J: At that time it did not feel like a risk, something is going for good thing.
R: Ok, so you felt that this is going to be better for everybody?

J: Better for everyone.

R: Sounds like you and uncle were on the same page. He also told me (during his interview with me) that “opportunity wise it was really very good.” So, he went before you, how much prior to you?

J: Almost two years before me.

R: So, tell me how were those two years for you?

J: At that time I was living with my mother-in-law, brother-in-law, in a joint family, so I did not feel lonely.

R: So, being around family helped.

J: Family… that helped and my mother-in-law, a little religious, so she taught me about religion stuff. She send me for (pause) to learn English a little bit and sawing class to pass my… to devote my mind in other things and at the same time I can learn some things.

R: Ohhh.. so she tried to keep you busy?

J: Busy… yes. But she tried to keep me busy…since she was so religious she kept me busy with those activities…pathshala, puja vidhi.

R: So, what you could learn scriptures etc.

J: Yes, and then I was helping around the house. For cooking and my brother-in-law kids were small at that time so I was sitting with them and help them with their homework and stuff.

R: Yeha. So you were busy during those two years, but how did you… he was there and you were here?

J: We keep in touch through letters, once a week.

R: Do you think about those letters now?

J: Not really…

R: Have you kept those letters?

J: No.

R: So, if you feel comfortable, then …so did communicating through letters helped, being away from him?

J: That time… the phone and everything was not available that much and was expensive and so we just write with letters.

R: Did he talk about talk about difficulties here, abt facing difficulties here (US)?
J: Not much, because he thinks I might gonna worry.

R: Oh, ok. What about you writing to him

J: Generally, I am happy with around family and joining this class and that, stuff like that and going to my mom’s house and stuff like that.

R: So, sounds like, both of you were trying not to worry the other (same sentence in Gujarati here) since he was so far away?

J: Right.

R: How and when did you find out that it was time for you to leave for the US as well?

J: He passed his degree. He got MS in industrial engineering. He got the job and then he got me…within six months, he applied for me and everything and that way I came in this country. So, as soon as he got the job and he arranged for my tickets and everything and that way I came here.

R: So, when he told you in one of his letters that “as soon as I get a job, I am going to start the (visa) paperwork for you,” how did you feel…. Now he has got a job and

J: I feel happy that I gonna go….now…

R: So, you were happy to be able to see him, to be able to come here. What else do you recall from that time, what were some the thoughts and feelings you had about coming here?

J: I was worried a little bit that I am going to lose my relatives, my family, my parents and that time I don’t know when I am gonna come back.

R: hmmm… so you did not know when you would be able to return (or come back, to India)> 

J: Yes, I did not know when I would see them, my parents and everyone again. That I have a little sad feeling that time.

R: Oh, you were sad for not knowing when you might be able to see all your people again. So, how did you deal with that?

J: Sometimes I feel like cry, you know, that when will I see all of them again.

R: So, what did your parents and your mother-in-law think about you coming to the US?

J: they say that “now you belong to him, so our responsibility will be done once you go there.”

R: And how did you feel about that, they are saying that are going now.

J: I feel great, a lot of gratitude for them (Upkaar) or for what they did and that’s why I feel a little sad that they took care of me just like a family member and I have to now leave them and go.
R: Did you feel scared?

J: Not really.

R: How would you describe how you were feeling at that time?

J: (Pause) just a little sad to leave my relatives, that’s the only thing, but I was not afraid that I gonna go there. That time I don’t have any idea.

R: So, did you imagine US, how Jmerica would be.

J: I saw the pictures he sent, some…that time I said large country, bit buildings and stuff like that.

R: So, that’s what you were anticipating that there would be large building and a lot of space. What were the photographs he sent you?

J: Pictures of his university, his town in WV where the university was.

R: So, when you looked at the photographs, what did you feel

J: wow, this is nice country, very clean

R: So, there was a part of you that wanted to come here

J: Main thing was that he was here

R: And you wanted to be where…

J: Where he is

R: You wanted to be with him. So, how did you start preparing for your trip?

J: (Pause) he send some paperwork. I signed it and then my brother-in-law phoned my relatives they helped me out to come here.

R: So, did you have any difficulty with doing the paperwork? Did you have to go the consulate

J: No, I did not have any difficulties. It was smooth.

R: What other kinds of preparations did you do, other than the paperwork, how did you get ready.

J: Not much….they had to do with food. I brought a lot of food stuff and I did not know about clothes. I bought my all Indian clothing.

R: Whatever clothes you wore, you

J: I wear sari and I came, I came here.

R: Do you find it strange now, that you did that?
J: Not really. I just feel that I have to change. Beside, you know (pause) which country I am I have to follow the rules. When I start job, they say you can’t sari here. I start job in a sawing factory and I did not know so I went for interview I got, I went with sari. It is nice of them that they explain that why I should not wear sari because you have to work on the machines.

R: So, where was this job?

J: Here in S., S. sawing factory.

R: So, after how long after coming to the US did you get the job?

J: After a year.

R: So after a year you got the job and how long did you work at the job?

J: Not much, Maybe not one year.

R: How was that experience for you? Did you ever think that you would ever work in the US?

J: No, not before, but I was getting bored. But even before that I joined the English class and stuff like that and then I… I have confidence that I can speak little but English now. So, just let me try.

R: And how did you find out about the job.

J: In a newspaper advertisement.

R: So, did the uncle help you or someone else?

J: Yes, he helped me.

R: I want to come back to it, but before we do that….so, going back when all your paperwork for the visa was done and all the preparations (for coming to the US) were done, as the day began to come closer, how did you feel? Jnd once you were actually on the plane.

J: Excited and on the plane I feel sad becoz of, I miss my relatives. Otherwise I was excited to come in this country.

R: Oh, ok. So you were excited to see him.

J: Yeha, after two years.

R: So, mixed feelings?

J: Yes, mixed feelings.

R: Like (sad) about not knowing when you will get to see all your loved ones again, but also excited as you were looking forward to your new life.

J: Right.

R: Once you got here, where exactly did you come?
J: So, can you describe your first year in the US.

R: First year when I came this country, I have language problem.

J: I couldn’t explain, I couldn’t speak English and that time I was little afraid…

R: Afraid of what?

J: Because I cannot explain stuff and how I gonna handle, how I gonna go to grocery, what am I going to speak. Who gonna help me. So, first three months I don’t like here and I told my husband, I don’t think I like here. I want to go back home and he says, “see, this is just three months. Maybe you can try. We can’t go back that fast back home.” Then, he says she has to do something. So, he told me to…to “you can go to English class” So, the English class was downtown Pitt YMCA and he says “you have to go by bus.” I said, “I cannot go.” I was afraid because I say “I don’t know anything, where to go.” Then he says that “I can explain to driver and he gonna help you” and I was little crying, I said, “All by myself, I cannot go there.” And he says, “you got to learn what you have to do.” Then I say, “Ok” and first day it was Wednesday and I was afraid in the bus. Nobody I knew, all the Americans and like that and the downtown came and the driver show me the building. I went there and I ask about class and they say ok in English and then I saw a couple of Indian ladies and then I was so happy.

R: Oh, ok, at the YMCA you saw some Indian ladies and you were happy, oh, ok.

J: Yes, they were attending classes before me and they were speaking Hindi, so I feel something better.

R: So you were relieved?

J: Yes, and I sit in the class. They were nice people in YMCA, they really help out.

R: So, you were scared, but you also had to be little brave.

J: Yes (In excited tone). Once I went to YMCA and joined the class and they teach the nice way and everything and all these Indian ladies and I feel comfortable to be there and then I went next class, next week and that way I get used to…

R: Travelling?

J: Right and next time I didn’t afraid in the bus because I knew the building and everything I knew.

R: So, it took…once you were scared, but then…you slowly

J: Then I realized people are not afraid here, people are helping a lot.

R: So, that helped to get your fear…
J: Yes, fear away.

R: So, you found people helpful?

J: Yes, very helpful.

R: So, as you were learning English, how did you…what did you do to communicate with people, grocery store or bus or wherever it was?

J: With gestures, hand action.

J: How did that go?

J: Pretty much ok, but especially in this area there is old population so old people cannot understand much.

R: oh, I see, what happened when you could not communicate? Did you have problems with that?

J: Couple of times, yes. One time, in the beginning I forget my address. He wrote (our) address and said “keep with you” all the time I kept with me and then I saw one guy and I show him and he figured out that she is looking for this address and he says, “come on I show you.” That time I don’t know what he speak.

R: Oh, you didn’t understand him.

J: No, I did not understand him and he give action so he (shows me hand action of ‘come with me.’)

R: Oh, ok. so he showed hand action that ‘you come with me’ and you went…

J: Yes, I went with him and he showed me and then I realized that this is my apartment.

R: So, this how you kind of, in the beginning try to get adjust here with the language.

J: Yes,

R: So, how did you feel that you couldn’t use Gujarati and you had to learn a whole new language?

J: I knew little bit English (In India), but we never speak, we never use (English) in India. So that’s why I afraid to speak and then I realized that English only thing I can speak coz nobody gonna understand Guajarati.

R: Yeha, how did you feel about that?

J: Then I try myself, little bit… (she searches here for the right word in English…enunciates a Gujarati word, ‘tutak tutak, translation could be ‘in broken English’ as Tutak literally means ‘broken’). My grammatical is zero.

R: So, the grammar is not right?
J: Not right…

R: but you picked up the language.

J: Yes, I picked up the language. Then I tried watching Sesame Street on TV and they are from beginning… J, B, C, D and words and everything, you know. So, I learn from them and then we bought some English books and I read that. I mean the YMCJ also gave some books and then I got tired to go to YMCJ because of too far so they gave book and H. teach me.

R: Oh, that’s how you continued…

J: Yes.

R: So, you watched Sesame Street on TV?

J: And H. says “you have to speak. Without reading and…. Don’t afraid, right or wrong just speak, speak, speak.”

R: So, that’s….you learned in so many different ways!

J: Right and then I realized that I have to learn and I have to speak.

R: So, did you slowly get used to speaking?

J: Yes, little by little, you know, in couple of months and then we got and… at grocery speak with somebody, I just listen because I cannot speak I listens them and then I… I sometime I figure out in my mind, you know. This and that and how are you and what you are doing and stuff like that.

R: So, socially….

J: Yes, socially

R: Slowly, you began to figure out, socially how to talk to people…

J: I pick up

R: By observation?

J: Yes, through observation.

R: Ok, that’s very smart, but did you ever feel that since you could not speak English in the beginning and as a result people treated you or behaved with you differently. Did you have problem?

J: No, I did not feel that way. In fact, I felt that they were trying to help.

R: So, people were mostly friendly…

J: Yes, people mostly friendly and they always nice. In the beginning I wear Sari and (they would say) “beautiful dress” and praised it.
R: It that time you felt, when they praised your sari or comments that you came from somewhere else...how did you feel or react?

J: I feel fine, you know. I never think that they are criticize or anything like that. They just curious.

R: You thought that they were curious, they just want to know. It sounds like you had a lot of difficulty with the language in the beginning when you arrived here in the US. What other challenges did you face in your first year, year and a half? What were some of your early experiences in this country?

J: When just language and then another is I couldn’t find an Indian grocery store.

R: Oh, here in C. or S., in this area?

J: Then one day in one store one Bengali guy met us and then he says “come on to our home. We can have tea” and he says “next week I am going to go to Pittsburgh and there is one Indian store so I will take you there.” That time we don’t have a car so we ask him, “you can pick us up.” That’s the first time I went there to the Indian store and I saw all the grocery, I was so happy.

R: That made you very happy, the store…

J: That way we become friends. He has a wife and kids. Then I told him whenever you go let us go, I come with you.” One time he says, “There is one India movie, if you guys wanna come with us.” And then I said, “Ok.” And then in that movie we went there are so many other Gujarati people and that’s where we met other Gujarati people. We took their address and phone number and we call and you know…

R: You establish some relations…(make friends)? So, when you came here there weren’t a lot of Indians here.

J: In C. there was only one Indian doctor here. That’s it.

R: And then you happen to meet this Bengali family, in to store. So, when you went to see the film and met other Gujarati families, did they live in Pittsburgh or elsewhere?

J: Most of them, all lived in Pittsburgh.

R: How did you begin to connect with them, start building relationships?

J: Well, we started to call each other and invite them to our home. Mostly, in the beginning we didn’t have a car, so people who have a car we invited them to our home for dinner and playing cards and stuff. And once we got a car then we start to go to our friends. And sometimes friends say, “another Gujarati friends” and that way establish Gujarati friends circle.

R: Ok, alright. So, at that time, other Gujarati families who had a car, you reached out to them and invited them to your home so that you get to know each other and relationships could be started. When did you get a car?
J: I think, maybe after a year of me coming here.

R: Oh, so that must be difficult without a car, so how did you manage without a car?

J: Everything close to walk, you know and sometimes neighbors are help us. To take us to the Laundromat and stuff like that.

R: Tell me more about these neighbors and your experience with them.

J: These were American neighbors. We were living on a hill, upon a hill. So, with grocery and stuff, sometimes they help us and their car.

R: How did you get to know your neighbors? You said earlier that at that time you lived in an apartment?

J: We just said, “Hello” when we get the newspaper out and the mail and like that and then one day (they) realize that we are foreigners, we don’t have a car so they says, “if you want to need some help, let us know.”

R: So, that’s how you got to know them. So, you began to meet other Gujaratis and other Indians. How was that for you?

J: I was happy (pause, speaks in Gujarati), (felt as if) there is (or are) someone there for us in this country. I began to feel less lonely.

R: What else did you go through in your early years?

J: Main this grocery store and (in Gujarati) not having (or knowing) our own people and not able to speak the language well (pause). Sometimes lonely feels.

R: So, what did you do or how did you cope when you felt that way, lonely?

J: Nothing. Watch TV and sometime I feel sad, you know. I feel like I better go to India.

R: So, when you thought that you want to go back,

J: Then I thought, “It’s too far, I cannot go too soon” So, I have to do something.

R: How did you communicate with your family in India?

J: By letters.

R: Who did you write to?

J: To my mom, my sister (pause). Before I came here, my mother-in-law died. So, we communicate with letters with my brother-in-law, my sister-in-law.

R: Ok, and they wrote back? How did you feel when you received a letter from India?

J: Oh, I feel so happy. Jt that time we couldn’t call. That was the problem.
R: So, that was news from home…

J: Yes, news from home.

R: In your first year or so, you really felt….there were times when you really wanted to go back.

J: Yes, all first year. I didn’t like in this country that much, especially in winter.

R: Tell me more about that.

J: Winter feels me…a little scary and it got so gloomy, quiet and nobody’s look from the window. You cannot see anybody and sometimes you are afraid that somebody gonna knock the door and come in the house or what.

R:: Because you were all alone in the house?

J: Yes, all alone. That time I say, “I feel so cold becoz I am not used to, I get sick and you get sick by yourself, nobody is around and it feels like crying. It feels more lonely, that nobody is here to take care.

R: Oh, what did you think about when it was so difficult? How did you cope? Did America turn out to be how you had imagined (before coming here), you know…that it would be like this or that, did it match?

J: I did not think that things gonna happen like that in this country (laughs).

R: What was different?

J: Feel lonely, most. I did not imagine how lonely it would be. First three years was very tough. After that I get little bit used to. I make friends and stuff (pause). Then I get a little used to with winter and everything.

R: So, first three years were very difficult…

J: Yes, very difficult. After three years, my English a little bit grow, that way I feel a little better.

R: How did that (my hesitancy)….how did that impact your relationship with your husband?

J: He understand my feelings. What’s going on last three years. So, he tried to explain and comfort me.

R: So, you had support…

J: He was the only one I have to support, to talk with someone coz nobody around from my country that I can talk in my language, like that you know.

R: So, there was no one even to talk in Gujarati… how did you feel about your own language (translation note: mother tongue instead of “your own language) that you could not even use it?

J: It was difficult.
R: Did you miss talking in Gujarati?

J: Lot, a lot (pause).

R: Because it happens to me all the time. I talk in Gujarati only when I talk to my family, my parents, over the phone. Otherwise, I feel, I am afraid that I will lose my own language (mother tongue).

J: Yes, yes, I feel afraid that I will forget Gujarati.

R: Do you feel that way (about Gujarati) even now?

J: Not now because now I talk with my children in Gujarati, with my friends too, over the phone as well. So, I don’t feel afraid anymore.

R: So, as you started to make other friends, Gujaratis and other Indians, you started were able to talk in Gujarati or Hindi… In those first three years, do you recall facing any other challenges or anything significant that stands out?

J: Not any other difficulties.

R: For your living, you lived in apartment/s at that time, how was that for you? Living conditions etc.

J: One apartments, they have the railway tracks and it was so noisy, all the time. Sometimes you talk with someone you cannot hear. So, I told (H.) that I don’t like here. Jround there it was business area. That’s why I don’t like that apartment, so we move again, within three months or something and we got another apartment. We stay couple of years there and then (pause) we thought… they increased the rent. So, we went another apartment and. In another apartment we stay a little long and then I was pregnant with J. and we thought now this apartment a little bit small. So we tried to get another apartment, but with kids they are not allowing so built the house.

R: So, did not allow kids in the building?

J: Jt that time, I say, “Oh, my god. They allow dogs and why not kids?”

R: So, they were allowing people to have pets, like dogs, but they said “no kids?”

J: Jnd being the foreigners sometimes they says “it’s rented already.”

R: Can you explain that some more to me?

J: I said and then H. says (pause). I feel discrimination…

R: Both of you felt that they are discriminating against you?

J: Yes, being that we were foreigners. Then we realize this is old town and old population and old people don’t like foreigners and even maybe young people.
R: That’s when you realized that maybe it is because we are different…how was that for you?

J: It was difficult. Those things…we are brown skin people (long pause) and we are foreigners…Then we decide to build a house.

R: That was one of the reasons you decide to have your own house?

J: Yes…

R: Looking back, do you feel that you experienced similar discrimination at other places, with other people?

J: No, it was mainly when we were looking for apartments.

R: By that time you also had other Indian friends, did you share/talk about your experience with each other of these kinds?

J: Yes, most of…50% same experience at that time. With language, discrimination, loneliness, and feeling sad. Also, missing India, missing home.

R: When you talked with them, how did you feel?

J: I think we were in same boat and we talk sometimes about vegetables stuff…how what we are getting here, like lettuce, people think that’s cabbage.

R: Oh, because it looks like cabbage…

J: And we are not getting many vegetable like India.

R: So, talking about it helped…

J: Yes, so people have experience with other vegetables and (they share that) this is nice, this is not nice.

R: Oh, you shared tips with each other. How did that feel?

J: I felt supported and helped feeling less lonely.

R: As you are looking back when you came… Now, I also came from India, but after a long time than when you came….do you think there is a difference (in our experience)?

J: Yes, generation gap are lot different. This generation (pause) they come here with education. With all the modern technology, computers and stuff. We don’t have that time and this generation is very smart. They have their own mind. They can make their own decision (pause).

R: that was not the case for you, you think? What was different about, for example, making your own decisions for you?

J: That time (pause)…that’s how this is (it was like that). More respect to elders. We cannot speak much.
R: That, you find, is the big difference. So you think that we come here already with a lot of education, we have and know the technology and more importantly, speak the language?

J: Yes, that makes all the difference now.

R: So, what do you think…what is different about our adjustment here?

J: You have much less difficulties. You can stand on your feet (translation note: speaks in Gujarati here, you can be independent). (In Gujarati), you can take all your decisions, you are not afraid.

R: Do you think there are other reasons for this difference in experience?

J: This generation very smarter than us.

R: I feel that you came here and established roots, nobody was here (from India) (translation note: made a foundation here). One reason I wanted to this research, a personal reason is that if your generation did not establish this base, then we would be having more difficulties, even if we come here with education. I feel that because you have already created all these support system, we have a bit easier than your generation, how do you feel?

J: (long pause). I think, (in Gujarati) it depends on the hard work of the individual because whoever has any relatives here (already living in the US), it is easy for them. But those who have no one (no relatives or support in the US) it is difficult. You had no one here and you had to do or be on your own, do everything. It must have been difficult for you. So, I feel that it depends on the individual’s hard work.

R: So, if you have some support here or relatives than it is easy, but otherwise, even knowing the language or with education, you are likely to have difficulties.

J: Yes, less difficulty that us because you know that language and you have education (in Gujarati).

R: What other adjustments did you have to do, for example when I came here I did not know how to do laundry here… in the first 3-4 years what kinds of adjustment?

J: You see, my husband was already living here for two years when I came, so I did not have worry about how to learn to work the stove or how to do the laundry or grocery. It was easy for me that he was here. He taught me all those things.

R: From that early period of living here that stands out for you, you recall?

J: (In Gujarati) There is one incident that stands out. I had been here only for fifteen days. I was only wearing sari, because I wasn’t feeling very comfortable (in wearing anything other than a sari or ‘western clothes) as I had never wore those kinds of clothes before. I was feeling shy (here ‘shy’ for translation in an Indian sense, different from ‘feeling ashamed’ I think. Original Gujarati is ‘mane sharam aavti hati). We went downtown and H. parked the car. He did not put enough money in the meter because we were just going across the road for a short time. But when we came back, we had a ticket, maybe the time got over. So, he (traffic police) left a ticket.
Then, H. saw it. The traffic office was right there. So, he told that “go to this building, there will be a police station there.” I got (became) scared. I said, “I am not going to the police.” So, he told me, “Don’t say anything. You don’t have to do anything. If they ask you anything, just say, ‘No English’” (Both of us laugh). I really did not know about anything here, about any laws here. So, I just did exactly as he (H.) told me. I showed the policeman the ticket (shows me with hands). The police said, “Oh, you got a ticket” and he just looked at the ticket and then he said something, I but I really did not know or understand what he said, so I said, “No English.” Now, I was wearing a sari, so maybe he thought that I am a foreigner and he felt that she did not know English. He said, “Beautiful sari” and other things and he tore up the ticket (both of us laugh). Since that time, that policeman lived just down from here and whenever he used to see me anywhere he would say, “Mrs. Shah, No English” (both laugh). He does not say that any more. I just met him day before yesterday and said hello. So, whenever I did not understand anything, I would say ‘no English.’

R: I feel that, as you were saying that you felt scared, but you also felt that you did not have any choice, you had to learn it. Even in this (ticket) case, you had to figure it out and do it, no choice. You had to do it.

J: That’s right, I felt that I had no other choice, no other option. I was put in a situation where I could not do or say anything else or go anywhere. I was little bit scared of the police, you know, (In Guajarati) in India, we are so scared of the police. But when I saw this policeman, I thought, he was smiling and I thought he is different. He was wearing the uniform, but then he smiled with me and said, “that’s ok.” Now, I know what “that’s ok” means, but at that time I did not know what that meant. He did this hand gesture (shows me) and I understood that he is saying “that’s ok and you can go now.”

R: (In Guajarati) During those early days, you frequently felt alone and lonely and frustrated and wanted to go back but you said to yourself that “I am here now and I have to learn…”

J: Yes, that’s right. (In Guajarati, man makkam karine) I mustered my mental resolve and tried as much as I could in whatever way and under whatever circumstances. Because there was no one, even H. wasn’t there all of the time. Who could I talk to, who could I approach. Noone. How could I learn by not talking at all.

R: (In Guajarati) So, now a first few years have passed, you have been living here. Tell me when did you have your first child, your son?

J: In 1977. After almost 10 years. I came to this country in 1968, nine years.

R: You said earlier that when you were pregnant with him, around that time you started to build your own house. Tell me about that.

J: (In Guajarati) (We built this house) in 1979.

R: Untill that time….

J: We lived from apartment to apartment. A. (was) born in the old apartment. (In Guajarati) We felt that that apartment was going to be too small to live with children and it was going to be too
much of up and down. So, we started to look for a bigger apartment, but whenever we would go
to see an apartment, A. would be with us, so some people (landlords) would not even open the
door (seeing that we had a child with us.)

R: Oh, you mean, seeing that someone with a child wanted to rent, they would say “no…”

J: (In Guajarati) Thinking that the child would make a mess and would be noisy and being
foreigners. So, we decided that (In Guajarati) we would….we even looked at some already built
houses, but we did not like them. Then we found this empty land for a house. So, we built (the
house) here.

R: You and H. decided to build the house, but until that time we have talked about negative
experiences, but what about some positive experiences?

J: (In Guajarati) Before that time we felt a lot that it is better to be back in India (Translator note:
aana karta to India ma sara). Sometimes we felt that it would be better in India, when we
struggled a lot.

R: (In Guajarati) Why do you think you felt that it would be better to be back home?

J: (In Guajarati) You know, we felt that you could get all the help there. We felt that all
‘our…our my people are there and we could have our own support (Translator note: ‘aapna
loko’), whereas here people are not even letting us see an apartment.

R: So, when you encountered these challenges, you especially felt that way.

J: (In Guajarati) But when this house was built and we came to live here, from that time on it (or
I) felt that this is now mine and this is my house. I started to feel settled here (‘set thai gaya).

R: So, can you recall how it was for you around that time, when you first came to see this land to
build the house?

J: Yes, when we saw and picked the land I was pregnant with N. (second child) and A. was two
years old. I was due in June and (pause)….this house…. (In Guajarati) we asked them to build the
house in less than six weeks because I was due to deliver my second child. So, I think they built
it in 6-8 weeks. And (pause) they built in May and then we moved here at the end of May. I
remember, my sister-in-law had come from India (to help with the delivery etc.) and then as soon
as we moved, within a week…maybe even less than a week, during that weekend N. was born.

R: How did you feel that you now had your own house/home and your second son was born
here? Tell me about it.

J: (In Guajarati) Oh, I was so happy (joyous). I felt such relief that finally “my (our) own house.
Finally, something that I (we) can call our own.” (Translator note: Haash, potanu ghar, potanu
kahevay evo kaink che). Now no one can kick us out (or ask us to leave) or say ‘no’ that you
can’t do that here. I felt that “This is my own.” It began to feel like ‘this is home, our home.’
After that, India ni yaad ochi thava mandi, I thoughts about India or thoughts of India became less
and less or less frequent. Because we now had a house of our own.
R: So, by that time you and your husband were in the US for almost nine years and slowly you began to build everything facing all these challenges. Building a house is a big step…

J: Yes, absolutely. (In Gujarati, bahu karkasar karine) We lived very frugally and saved money to build the house. We tried and did not have any unnecessary expenses (Translator note: unnecessary spending or wasteful spending). We made sure to pay all the education expenses (for H., to his older brother) and we also sent money back home to India to family. All the responsibilities we had. Slowly, over time all that was done (taken care of). Then, we made this house and then there was money needed for mortgage. So, you see, we had to live frugally. That was difficult. Whenever we used to see our other friends, we felt that or observed or noticed the value of the Dollar, it’s buying power or potential (Translator note: “ame joyoon ke dollar ni garmi ketali che). At that time we just did not have the money to be wasteful or do unnecessary expenses and then over time that has become a habit, you know. Being always careful about money, trying to be frugal.

R: I see, because a lot depended on being careful and save money.

J: (In Gujarati) Yes, we had sacrificed so much, leaving our own home, all our people, relatives behind. So that we could build a better life and have opportunities. I wasn’t even married yet and my parents had rightly pointed out the bright future here. Once we had this house, I began to feel that in this country and my home. I began to feel that “now I am not going to go anywhere”. The kids were born. We then had their responsibilities, their education. The more these responsibilities and other connections (relationships here) grew, the more this house began to feel like my own home.

R: (In Gujarati) And this country…?

J: (In Gujarati) Well, at that time I did not feel that way about this country. I still thought about (remembered/recalled) our India from time to time. Even now, after all these years, I myself don’t feel that I am an American. I am a Gujarati. I feel that. Even if I am a citizen and this country has an obligation on me (Translator note: or I owe this country a debt (aa desh no upkarr che). I am thankful for it, but I am a Gujarati and my religion is Jain. I still feel that way.

R: If someone asks you, J. who are you, about your identity, you would say, “first and foremost, I am a Gujarati?”

J: Yes, that’s right.

R: Tell me more…how or why do you feel this way?

J: I feel that way. (In Gujarati) First of all, It is because of our ‘sanskar’, my upbringing or my culture, or my values (Translator note: not sure how to translate ‘sanskar’). Because of our Gujarati Sanskar. Maybe there are American families too who have ((Translator note: or values, I had a lot of difficulty in translating this Gujarati word, ‘sanskar.’ Js there is no equivalent English translation. One suggestion was ‘culture’ but culture is a broader term as used in English…. When I asked others and provided the context, culture was strongly suggested, but I feel that sanskar is culture, but in a very specific sense and includes ‘values, upbringing’ as well.
R: Ok, so first and foremost I am a Gujarati…. 
J: Yes.
R: What about Indian…
J: (Long pause) (In Guajarati). Since I have been born in India, Indian is right (Translator note: Indian barabar che), but in language and in Sanskar (Translator note: or through or by language and sanskar, bhasha thi and language thi to hoon Gujarati j choon), I am a Gujarati. I am more of a Gujarati (than an Indian).

R: You also pointed out that once the house was built…the walls were built with a roof on top. You had a home, a physical home of your own that you could see, touch, and feel. Since then your thoughts and feelings about where your home is also began to change, “this is my home now and we are not going anywhere.”

J: Right. (In Guajarati) This is my own now, this is it. India is my home because I have my relatives there. They make it my home. The home that I can call my own is here, here in America. Because we can’t afford to build a house in India. It’s never going to happen. We are not going to be able to have a home in India. So, there is no place there to call our own, own home. Here because of all these opportunities, we have everything. So, now this is where my home is. This is home.

R: So, slowly you began to have this realization over the years or a sudden realization or feeling
J: I think (In Guajarati) it happened slowly, over the years. I began to realize that “Now, I (we) have to live here only. There are many opportunities here. There is comfort here and because of the easy availability of all the necessities (life necessities), we can live here comfortably. So, considering all that I began to feel that I have to live here.

R: Once you realized that or accepted that, what impact did that have for you? How did you feel?
J: Feel good. (In Guajarati) That although we had to live with all those hardships and very frugally in the beginning, but now we can have all these comforts or live this comfortably. There is no shortage for anything and we are content (Translator note: Khadhe pidhe sukhi che), that we were able to provide very good education to our kids. If we would have been in (or remained in ) India, we would not have been able to do or achieve all this.

R: So, as you began to felt that this is my home and I have to live in this country, it began easy?
J: Yes, it did. The struggle in the beginning, the first 10-15 years, but then I feel that a life has been built here (Translator note: she uses passive voice here in Gujarati: Jhiyan have life built thai gai as opposed to active voice: I or we built life here).

R: In those 10-15 years, you also built many other relationships here and you had kids here…
J: Yes, for my kids...their home is here only because they are born here (In Guajarati) so they always consider themselves ‘Americans’ only.

R: Can you say more about that…

J: (In Guajarati) Well, you know, how I say that “I am a Gujarati,” they would say that they are American, because we (are) born here.

R: When they say that… (In Guajarati) how do you feel?

J: I feel bad when they say that, (In Guajarati) (I say or want to say) “no, since your mother or mom is Gujarati, you are also Gujarati. Your parents are Gujarati. It’s ok that you are American and you were born here. You are natural born citizens, so you are American, but you are still Gujarati.” (Translator note: Pan tame Gujarati to khara.).

R: So, as far as your identity is concerned you are a Gujarati…

J: Yes.

R: And how do they react to this or say about this or feel about this?

J: (In Guajarati) They don’t think that way. They say “we speak English and live in this culture and atmosphere (Translator note: Jame to ahiyanij bhasa boliye che ane ahiyanaj atmosphere maa rahiye che)” But when they matured and grew up…rather late, after they turned 25-30, they started to feel that “no, we are Gujaratis.” (after this she says something more, but it is unclear, inaudible).

R: Tell me how or why do you think they have come to realize that “we are Gujarati as well as Americans”?

J: (In Guajarati) Now I feel that they have accepted it. I feel that it has become a bit easier. Earlier I used to feel that we have come here and did all these things, but (our/my) children insist that “We are Americans only.” (repeats this one more time.)

R: When you listened to that, how did you feel?

J: (In Guajarati) Well, at that time I used to wonder (used to worry) “what if they become Americanized?” in terms of culture and everything (or in all aspects of life.) So, then I tried to…sometimes I try to strict with them, I tried to brainwash them, I try to…when they were younger as kids.

R: Can you say more about that or give me an example?

J: (In Guajarati) I would take them to Sunday school, would try and teach them Gujarati at home. Then when they would sit down to eat, I would say, “I will serve you what you want only if you ask me for it in Gujarati.” I was being strict with them like that. When they were younger, like kids, I was able to do those things, but after growing up a little bit, they began to realize that “Mummy is trying to brainwash us.” So, they stopped paying as much heed. Then, I also understood what was going on. I realized that it was alright, they had learned some basic things.
During their teenage years, there would be some arguments (between me and the kids), but them I let it go, “this is the age.” But when that period passed….Now, recently when A. went to India, he was speaking in Gujarati only with everyone there. He felt on his own that “no, (it’s good) that mom has taught me Gujarati.”

R: Since we are talking about children…when A. and N. started to go to school…. Can you tell me about that experiences…sending and having your kids in school?

J: In school…overall I would say it was good, (In Guajarati) but when they were in kindergarten, at that time they did not encounter any discrimination from the teachers, but the kids their own age called them ‘foreigners’ and teased them. They said things like “Hey you, Chinese.” So, I did a conference with his teacher.

R: How did you find out that this was going on at the school?

J: A. told me. Then, I went to his school and told his teacher what was going on. The teacher said, “Mrs. Shah, don’t worry. I will keep eye on him.” The, the second time… there was a PTJ meeting and I asked the teacher if everything was alright. Then, A. was also happy. I noticed from his behavior that the teacher is helping him. Slowly, by the time when they were in the 4th or 5th grade, they were always honors students, so they became quite famous in the school. That these were really smart kids. All the kids understood that he is a very smart kid and comes from a good family and that he is really good and he is not mischievous. So, (he started to get) respect from all the teachers and the kids. But it happened after 4th grade. (In Guajarati) Up to 1, 2nd grade, they had to….by other kids (they faced discrimination).

R: So, when they would come home and tell you about what was going on at school or if you observed it, how did you explain your kids what was going on?

J: That time I get angry so I say, “If they says, next time the kid says, ‘Hi, Chinese’, then tell him ‘Hi American!’” (We both laugh). You got to learn little fight. (In Guajarati) But our kids could not really do it, they were very quiet kids. So, that’s why I went to his teacher.

R: So, you did feel little angry for them…

J: Then I realized that kids would always be kids. If it would have been a teacher or an adult who would have said or done such a thing then you feel how could you do such a thing to a kid. But with children, it’s different. But at that time, I did feel (and worried) that if right now my kids have to face this, then what could happen in future (what would they have to suffer or tolerate)? That thought did cross my mind.

R: So, what did you imagine, what kind of things they would have to face?

J: (In Guajarati) I wondered if there would be fights (with other kids). Will my kids be bullied. I had such thoughts. But when I talked with his teachers…All the school teachers were really very good and helpful and they always looked after A. N. did not face that many problems. The only problem with him was that all the other kids would say to him, “You are A’s brother.” He would come home and complain to me that “Why am I only known as A.’s brother and not as N.” I told him that “He is your older brother and it’s o.k.” Over time he understood.
R: Both your children studied in English medium schools. What role or impact did that have?

J: Actually, because of that and them, my English improved. Later as they got older they would correct my grammar etc. and that was really beneficial to me.

R: Did you ever feel that my children speak in English…

J: No. Because from the beginning I would always speak with them in Gujarati at home, even if they would answer me in English. Even now that is the case. I always insisted. At home, it was always Gujarati. Once they started school, that had an impact, I think. A. remembers, but N. has forgotten quite a bit, although they both understand Gujarati perfectly. But even to this day, I continue to speak with them in Gujarati, in fact, even with Rae ann (American daughter-in-law), I speak in Gujarati. I ask her, “Baht appon, ha ken a?” and then A. explains a little bit to her. So, H. would speak in English with them, even at home, but I decided that it’s ok, if he wants to speak in English (with the kids), but I would speak only in Gujarati with them. I wanted to see and make sure that they understood the language. A. speaks quite a bit of Gujarati. N. not as much

R: So, it seems that for you it was really important that your children should learn and know your language, even if not perfectly, but they should know your language.

J: Yes, very important.

R: What about your religion…earlier you said that you are a ‘Gujarati Jain’. Being of Jain religion, that is a big part of your identity. Tell me more about that.

J: I did not face as many challenges when it came to being a Jain. I have taught my children Navkar (a basic, fundamental prayer) etc. taught them from early childhood. Whenever s.th religious was going on, a festival etc., when they were children, they would sometimes protest, but I would say we would have to do some rituals or say prayers, they don’t say ‘no’ anymore. I am proud of that. I feel that it is because I taught them those things since their childhood and have instilled those (religious Sanskar) in them, so now they don’t say ‘no’ to me completely.

R: Having to raise your children here in the US, what were some of the things/factors that were really important to you?

J: (In Guajarati) That they have (or get) very good/right (or really good) sanskar and that they don’t get/develop/catch any bad habits. (It was important) that they don’t fall into that kind of (wrong/bad) atmosphere where they drink (alcohol) or smoke. Because at that time we would here of such things a lot, so I was afraid. When they went away to college, at that time too, I (we) were behind them, you can say, over protective. Those were my feelings and worries and I was behaving like that. So, sometimes at that age, college age, they did not like that. A. still tells me, “Mummy you did not give us enough room to grow up.” But, I tease him, “who is keeping you now, grow up as much as you like.” (laughs.) Sometimes, I was really scared that they would get on the wrong path, in spite of instilling such good sanskar in them, you never know. You can’t follow them everywhere. I did a lot of bugging, calling them every day and all that, but they did not like that at all.
R: You said that it was important for you that your children were raised with right/good (Gujarati, Jain, Indian?) sanskar, language, and religion. But your kids were in American school, went to college etc. So, how do you see that impacting your children? Were you worried about those values?

J: Yes, I was afraid, but my children understood that my mother would not like all those things, so they stayed away from those things.

R: What do you think about the American views and ways of raising children and family?

J: I think sanskar is also important to them and they raise their children well. But one thing here when they consider their child to be an adult at 18 and expect them to be on their own, that I feel is not such a good thing. I think that is too young an age. If it is something like 25 years or so, that’s fine. Now, see, to expect that you find a job for yourself and pay for your own education at 18, that’s too young. I feel that children are not ready/mature at that time for so much responsibility. I think that that’s why there is increase in violence. Children become frustrated. They get angry with parents. There is a lot of difference between the way they raise children and the way we do. Too much independence given at a very early age.

R: Would you say that in bringing up your children here, acquiring that balance (between independence and sanskar) was difficult for you?

J: Yes, it was

R: Maybe they brought the outside world inside, in home…

J: Here, at when children are 10 years old, they are selling newspapers and other small jobs. Once I remember, A. said to me that one of his friends sold newspapers and earned money, “why don’t you allow me to do that? Can I sell newspapers?” I told him, “If I allow you to sell papers, I am sure I will end up with doing half you'r job for you. If you want to earn money, then if you help me with doing your laundry, clean the table and I will pay you 50 c. for it.”

R: So, you tried to find some middle ground with that?

J: Yes, “I told him that work at home and I will pay you for those activities.”

R: So, he would get the experience of working and with money, but not by working outside of the home.

J: It’s too young, 10 years. 10 Years (In Gujarati), what if someone kidnaps you, what will you do. And in winter, you come from school and it’s cold, it’s likely that your mom will only say, “Let me do it for you.”

R: This example, how you tried to find balance between two cultures… Were/are there other areas as well where you had to do that or faced differences?

J: (In Gujarati) yes, for example, when they have 10 years old kids cutting grass for money. I think that is too young. At 15-17, that’s fine. How would a 10 years old manage a lawn-mower…
R: When they went to college for the first time...leaving home, how was that for you?

J: It was really difficult for the first couple of months. I was worried more that (pause) (In Guajarati) will they be able to handle being in college. What kinds of friends will they meet, what kind of influence they would have (on my children), what if they get into the habit of drinking alcohol; will they study properly or not; will they get into drugs. I just kept having all these negative thoughts.

R: Did you talk about this with some of your other friends here who also had their children in college? Since you were so worried?

J: No, but (In Guajarati) H. told me, “No, don’t think so negatively. We will be watchful over them.” We would actually just call them a lot and check with them (Translator note: check on them) and then sometimes when they were busy, then….slowly we realized that they are strong and would not do any of those things, so we let go (of those worries). Our trust (in them) increased ((Translator note: we learned to trust them). Right now I am so proud of both of my kids. (In Guajarati) They worked hard for their education and got good jobs, they maintain(ed) all the sanskar. I was most worried about instilling and maintaining sanskar in my kids while raising them in America, how would I do that? Because I would hear from some of our friends that the daughter of another friend smoked. So, when I would hear such things, I would feel scared and worried. (In Guajarati) The biggest question (or worry for me) was whether they would be able to handle (deal with) all the independence when they would leave home to go to college and at college would they be able to handle their independence.

R: And the values…

J: A. grew his hair long (when he was in college) which I did not like at all.

R: Why was that?

J: (In Guajarati) I worried if he was going to changing or turning (American???) (Translator note: difficulty here in translating the word ‘vatlaya nahi jaye); I worried if he was going to turn in to a hippy. I was having all these negative thoughts (when he had long hair). But, that’s the age. (In Guajarati) At that time, it was a fad for him that he was interested in (Translator note: Ane shokh lagyo to). He had seen other kids in the college with long hair.

R: Did you share your worries with him?

J: No, I just used to tell him that “this is not our sanskar. It doesn’t suit you. Cut your hair.” But the more I told him to cut his hair, the more he grew it (both of us laugh). So, I just stopped telling him. That was his age, he was a teenager. So, I stopped telling him about it. Then, once he got an opportunity in CJ to work with a famous newsman and he had an interview. I told him then that “If you cut your hair, then I will allow you to go otherwise not.” He said, “Mummy, this is a life time opportunity for me and I can lose it.” And I told him, “Well, this a life time opportunity for me as well to get you to cut your hair.” He felt that my mother is tough (strict), she would not let me go, so he cut his hair (both of us laugh).

R: It seems to me that between you and H., you were in charge of the discipline and....
J: Yes, and H. (was in charge of children’s) studies. (In Gujarati) Study and all the guidance they needed, for example, during college application he helped them with all the forms they had to fill out. My part was to…give them (instill in them) sanskar and help them maintain them.

R: What about being a vegetarian? Here…

J: From the beginning (from childhood), whenever we would go for shopping and they see cookies and other things, I explain to them that this has eggs so we can’t buy them and I explain them why not. (In Gujarati) “that there is life in eggs and why we do not eat meat, meatballs and all those things.” I told them not to eat anything with meat. I explained to them that it was also not very good for (your) health and our religion forbids it.” They would ask me, “why is meat not allowed?” So, I would explain to them “because there is life in meat. Would you like it if someone cuts your hand and eats it?” (pause). He also wanted to have a dog as pet and I told him, (In Gujarati) “Would you like it if someone puts a collar around your neck and pulls it?” (pause). “They cut a living, breathing cow and eat it.” When they grew some more they asked me, “why do we drink cow’s milk?” I said that “taking milk from a living cow is still violent, but not as much as killing it.” (Translator note: mand hinsa kaheya.)

R: Oh, ok. Do you feel if you were raising your children in India you would not have to find answers to these kinds of questions?

J: (In Gujarati) Absolutely yes. I would not have to find these answers. Sometimes I would feel (or I feel) angry (or frustrated) with their strange questions about religion, but I know that they asked those questions out of their innocence and because of lack of understanding. I realized this only afterwards. It is their curiosity. I would say “Simandharswami vichere che.” First they don’t understand the word ‘vichere che.’ They would say, “if that is the case, why don’t you invite him to our home for dinner?” Then I told him, “Maybe you need to go to a proper scholar.” Jt those times I felt that they asked the questions with such unrespect, but in reality they did not know and even I did not know how to explain those things to them.

R: Do you feel that if this was the case in India, if a child in India was told that “Simandharswami vichare che” they would just say ok and here…

J: Here there has to be an explanation for everything, why we need to do this or that, for example, “what is moksha?” I have given them explanations (for these questions of religion) so now they…. “That’s why there are all these symbols in temple, so that you can remember what is the explanation. That this is raag, dwesh. This is abhamandal behind the idol of the God.”

R: It seems that in the matters of religious sanskar too you had to do a lot of adjustments…

J: Yes, a lot of adjustment, (In Gujarati) but I feel that if you (share/instill) these sanskar from the childhood, doesn’t matter if it’s ‘brainwash’ (Translator note: it feels like brainwash, “bhale brainwash to brainwash”), then it stays with them (gets ingrained in them). After that it doesn’t matter if they ask all kinds of questions.

R: It seems that since you were raising your children in this culture, you also had to adopt and adjust.
J: Right. We had to find answers to questions as they were raised for us. (In Guajarati). It was also important to find ways to keep them in touch with (our families) in India. Once they were growing up, the facility to make phone calls became available. I would sit with them with all the photograph albums and showed them, “This is your uncle, this is you aunt.” And I would ask, “What is mummy’s brother called (in Gujarati)? Mama. What about father’s brother, Kaka.” I would say it in Gujarati only, not in English. So, they know their aunts and uncles in India and they know who are all our relatives and what they are called (their relation to us) in Gujarati. This keeps them from calling everyone just “uncle, uncle or aunty, aunty.” That is Americanized, everyone is either an uncle or an aunt.

R: Why was this important for you?

J: So that they would know all our relatives and keep in contact and they continue to remain aware of our ‘reet rivaj’. (Translator note: our ways or sanskar).

R: So, the connection to the extended family….like you said earlier that you are first and foremost a Gujarati and an Indian…that is also because of these connections to the family.

J: Yes, because of continued connection to the family, even in India and my children have it too. These are the sanskar. They don’t call everyone ‘aunty, aunty.’ But since they are used to knowing and calling everyone by their right name and relation, like D.mama etc. they like to say it the right way. Otherwise, it just becomes ‘aunty.’

R: For you a balance between religion, independence, Gujarati sanskar and family is really important.

J: It is really important to me, even to this day (or even now) that my children (pause) stay in touch with Gujarati. Not just English. “You are capable of doing it; you are smart and you understand (the importance or have an understanding) then why not?”

R: Ok. Tell me about your experience and connection with the Indian community here.

J: (In Guajarati) When the temple (Jain-Hindu temple of Pittsburgh) was constructed here in 1981, then our relationship and connections with the Indian and Gujarati community really grew. Our friend circle increased. We were able to socialize more as a result of having the temple here. They started a Sunday school at the temple. My children did not attend it for a very long time, only for two years, but they were able to understand what Sunday school was. A. still recalls to this day what he learned there, “This is a big lake (this sentence in Gujarati.)” He would always say, “(I can’t go to Sunday school), my stomach is really hurting.” But I would still force him to go. But the temple was really far was us, so I would teach them at home. It wasn’t like at the school, but whatever I could teach them. But one of the biggest advantages of having the temple was that our friend circle increased, we became more social (social activities increased) and religious activities became available and increased. If you felt like it, you could go to the temple. They started to have many events there. Slowly, our Jain group (of friends) also increased.

R: In all the years that you have lived here, for forty years… in these years how has the community here changed?

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J: Which community?

R: Indian, Gujarati, Jain all these communities.

J: That community is now well established here in all these years. And People who came during the same period as us, their views/thoughts (Translator note: “Emna viharo”) are same (as ours?).

R: You mean, between 1965-1970… will you tell me more about that? In what way?

J: Well…they change (adjust/accommodate) a little bit, when it comes to things like their children as they grow older, but people of our generation still feel/believe/think that the maintenance/preservation of Sanskar is really important (most important/crucial). They feel that sanskar has to be preserved and passed on to our children. But it is not always possible to do that with all children. Children have their own individual minds so they sometimes behave as they want to, which is different from our sanskar. When that happens, some parents feel sad. For example, take A., when he wanted to marry Rae ann (an American), he told us that he has an American girlfriend, we felt little sad. I actually felt very sad. I said, “Why couldn’t you find a Gujarati girl, an Indian girl. Does she eat meat, other things?” I felt got angry and started to attack him (Translator note: maybe a better translation would be ‘started to question him’ but ‘attack’ is her own word.) But then when I/we thought calmly we realized that no we needed to adjust and accommodate otherwise we would lose our son forever. At that time we really felt surprised and sad. H. felt that way more than me. (We thought), “Let’s go back to India”. I said, “We can’t go back like that. We have to be patient and need to think about it.” We thought a lot and discussed it and we patiently accommodated and adjusted. And I said, “We will have to give our consent happily.” Because he just told us that, “I will never get married (if you don’t give your consent for her).” So, we gave our consent and then he started to bring her here to meet us and we realized that she is a good/nice girl. After that… but in the beginning, it was difficult, it has been difficult for other parents as well. But now, more recently, when it is a similar situation (of an Indian son/daughter marrying an American), the parents accept and just say, “It does not matter, whoever he/she is. All the matters is that they are happy/content, if they are happy/content (Translator note: sukhi rahe, sukhi rahe).

R: That is a big adjustment…

J: Yes, the biggest adjustment of all (of living here), the task/responsibility of settling and marrying your children.

R: Do you think that people who came during the same period as you, they would like their children to marry or find Indian partner, but that has changed a lot too.

J: Yes, those parents, like us have also changed and are changing a lot. They want their children to be happy. It’s like, “Adjust in your life.”

R: It seems like that kind of adjustment was difficult…

J: Yes, very difficult. We wondered how will we (it would be accepted/we would) accept it (her, R.A.).
R: Can you help me understand that more?

J: By ‘accepting’ I mean, (pause)… If he marries an American, how will we accept her? For starters, language will be a problem. (we wondered/worried) what kind of person she will be. She will eat meat. We just had all these negative thoughts and that we would not be able to adjust.

R: Did you also think about the Indian community here, what they might think?

J: (In Gujarati) No, there is no such pressure here because there have been other families where their children have married an American. We did not worry about sanction from others. It was me who were really worried that “No, if he marries an American, then will she be able to accept our culture?” We will never be able to accept/adopt their culture, their way of life or way of eating (food habits or culture of food), but will she be able to accept or adopt. But in our case, we have been very happy.

R: Even after being here for 40 years, you have to adjust to this culture.

J: (In Gujarati) Yes and it takes time. We are beginning to adjust/accommodate but not in/about certain things.

R: For example?

J: (In Gujarati) Their way of daily living (lifestyle, Translator note: raheni karni), food habits, dress code (ways of dressing)...they are really good people, in every way. But certain things are difficult to accept. Like, food habits (their food culture, mainly meat eating), drinking alcohol and smoking…

R: These things feel like…don’t belong to our culture.

J: Yes.

R: Even after all these years, it feels that you must constantly adjust in small as well as big areas, but it’s not possible to do in certain areas or with certain matters. Do you feel that other families also have similar experiences…

J: I am not sure, but I think that for, maybe 50% that could be the case, that their experiences are similar to ours.

R: What do you think is the difference between J. who was in India (before coming to India) and J. now who has lived here for 40 years?

J: (In Gujarati) J. who lived in India was more conservative and the one now….as the time demands and if needed (if circumstances demand), she is more willing to adjust, accommodate, and be open. She is required to change. But (even for this J., J. now), certain things, like sanskar and in matters of religion are very difficult to change. They cannot be changed so easily and (I feel that) certain aspects of our culture are very different than ours.

R: In what ways?
J: Like (In Guajarati), in the case of teenagers. When parents let them go for long hours (outside of the home) or very few parents take keen interest or concentrate/are curious about on their children’s (Translator note: ‘chokara chokri na) friends’ circle. They have to deal with teenage pregnancy and other such issues. They are not as strict about these things. Single parents, that is different than our culture.

R: So, you think that these are some fundamental (between our and their cultures?)

J: Yes.

R: Suppose you meet that J. who lived in India what would you say to her?

J: (In Guajarati) I would just tell her that America is good to/for living a comfortable life (or if you want to live a life of comfort than America is good (is a good country). Js far as (your) culture goes, you have to (or need to) be very careful that you don’t slip (or lose your own culture, have to be watchful about not losing your culture). Only adopt the good aspects of their culture (or adopt only the good things from their culture) and stay away from certain things because you could lost your own sanskar; your children can be brainwashed. You have to be really careful. Otherwise, there is a lot of comfort here and you can be content/happy about the basic necessities of life. Even with limited income, middle class people can live comfortably, in a healthy way. That is the most advantageous thing/aspect about America. They have the best health insurance (is available). It is a very good country for health issues. In India you can’t afford health insurance so you can’t go to the doctor.

R: I feel that your experience of living here for all these years, the American in you feels that there is plenty of opportunity here, live here comfortable in little income, educate you children, you can….

J: You can live better life here, a comfortable life. (In Guajarati) In India, one day there is no water available and next day there is no cooking gas. It is not that bad now, but in the past there was scarcity for everything. Now, if you observe, there is a lot of hardship (In India) whether you have resources or not. There is too much inflation and cost of living is very high. So, even the middle class man cannot live a comfortable life. Secondly, the provision of social security here is really good. There is no such provision in India. Here, the government will help even the person who is living on the street (homeless); will provide him food stamps and help him to get back on his feet. I think there is a lot of humanity here, compared to India. Overall, if you consider the daily life of a middle class man, then he is able to live here comfortably. Even education up to 12th grade for children is free. In India, you have to pay starting with kindergarten. There is less corruption here where as there is a lot there. So, if you look at all these things then life here is better, but if you look at sanskar for children here, then it is more worrisome (scary???, dar lage) here compared to India.

R: In all these years that you have lived here, have been going back to India from time to time? Tell me about going back to India and how has that experience changed over time, since you first came here and more recent visits.
J: (In Gujarati) Due to old age, we don’t go back to India that often any more, but (I often/always) pine (Translator note: wish to, she says, “man to thayaj”) to go (to India), to meet all my relatives, to do the religious pilgrimages and it always feels like home (when I go back to India), as if I have come home. I have life India for all these years, but still I feel that I have come back to India. But then when I live there for 2–3 months and experience some hardship then I feel a bit bored and return back. So, we have forgotten the wish (or the idea of, or the desire to) to live in India permanently (or return to India permanently). Because of all those hardships there. The desire or wish is to meet all the relatives. It has to do with (maintaining) family connections. That is the most important thing in wanting to or to visit India. Also, for shopping because things are cheaper there.

R: It seems that when you go back to India, you feel that you have come home, that feeling of being home. Are you surprised that you feel that way….tell me more about it.

J: It’s not quite the same. I feel like I have come back to India. I tend to remember all those old memories. You remember all the things from your childhood, where you lived, where you played with your friends. You recall all those memories.

R: How do you feel at that time?

J: I feel really happy. I like to meet my old friends and reminisce about all memories. I feel happy (joyous). When I visit India, I don’t remember the hard times.

R: If someone were to ask you where is your home, how would you reply?

J: (In Gujarati) If someone asks me now (at this time) where my home is I will (would) say “America” because now my feelings of being at home is stronger for here (America).

R: And what about India?

J:If someone asks me “where are your sanskar (from)?” then I will (would) say, “My sanskar are from India.”

R:If someone asks where is home, you will say, ‘America.” If (someone asks), “who are you?” then you will say, “Gujarati Jain,” maybe Indian and then American.

J: (In Gujarati) Yes, right. Only my home is here, the rest is India (or in India). Religion (in) India and sanskar (in) India (or Indian?)

R: You are well connected with the Gujarati and other Indian community here over the years, what about your experience/relationship with other (communities) that also live here in America?

J: (In Gujarati) I have very few relationships (connections) with Americans, but the ones that I have (those people) are very good natured and very helpful and they are friendly. For example,

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5 Considerable translator’s dilemma or challenge about how to translate ‘man to thayaj’ as I think that in that there is an emotional component which is lost with words such as ‘wish or desire’. Here there is an indirect or maybe even more direct presence of nostalgia.
my next door neighbor, “she is very nice.” (In Guajarati) She is very helpful and friendly, she is like my friend. If needed and I were to live the house in her care, I would not have to worry about anything.

R: In this country, there are not only Indians, but other communities as well who have come here, Asians, Hispanics, African-Americans as well…

J: I don’t have any contacts with those communities (individuals from those communities). I know few Americans, mostly I know Gujaratis.

R: In your opinion, what is the direction in America is going?

J: (long pause) (In Guajarati) America is fine to live a comfortable life. Right now the economy is not doing that well, but it is a strong country and it will (is used to) survive. No matter how many challenges/disasters it faces, (for example) floods or weather related, immediately…even in other countries of the world, it helps. Humanity in America (or American humanity) is stronger than other countries of the world.

R: That humanity….you are proud of?

J: Right. If you see, even right now, how much help the Red Cross and the Salvation Army provides to people. Right now in winter they donate jackets to children and adjusts, that is very helpful. If needed they quickly build or make shelters available. When it comes to helping (others, America) is number 1.

R: In all the years you have lived here, how do you think India has changed?

J: (In Guajarati) Yes, India has changed significantly. First thing…the politics in India is rotten (Translator note: sadi gayoon che) and there is very high corruption. There is good modern technology there now and people are well educated. There are some good hospitals too (pause), but wherever you see, “Money talks.” If an average/common man needs to go to the hospital, he needs money in his pocket, even if he is dying, they would not admit him without money. Here, they would first provide him treatment and get him back to life. They may later take that same man to court (for not paying for his hospital expenses), but first they will treat him. Where as in India, that is not the case.

R: So, you think that the life for the common man is very hard in India now…

J: Yes, (people) get no help from the government. Whoever has the power, rules. The corruption is rampant and they fight among themselves. It’s no use having a leader who may be strong (capable) mentally, but not physically, which is the case right now. The prime- minister of India right now cannot do much physically and struggles. Politicians can get power by paying for it.

R: Do you think India has changed socially and culturally?

J: (In Guajarati) (pause). Yes, I think it has, socially.

R: In what ways?
J: There is an increase in love marriages; the extent to which the film industry (Bollywood) influences (everyone) has increased tremendously. In that industry, both Hindus and Muslims can work and meet together. In other areas of the society, there is a lot of violence, but in film industry, people work together amicably and in that industry where there needs to be censorship, the government does not do anything. There too money talks.

R: Now, we have been talking for quite a while and I asked you a lot of questions and you have been very generous in your replies. But has there been anything that was important for you to share, but we have not yet talked about or you would like to share?

J: I think we have talked about many different things and a lot has been covered.

R: I have one more question. Do you think that being a woman played a part in coming to the US and getting adjusted to living here?

J: I don’t think so. (In Guajarati) I don’t think it is different (for a man and a woman). I think it was pretty much the same when I came here from India.

R: Do you think that Indian women who come here or came here that they have to adjust more, as a woman as a wife? Compared to say, in my case, my brother has also come here but I feel that it was and is somewhat different for me and for him. What do you think?

J: I don’t think so (pause).

R: Ok.

J: (In Guajarati) Women who have come here became more independent after coming here and living here.

R: You feel that way? Do you feel the same way about yourself?

J: There is no one here over you (Translator note: no one here older or other family member keeping an eye on you, ‘tamara per ahiyan koi hoi hafi). In India, there is everyone in a joint family. So, sometimes you are not able to do some things that you want or you have decided to do. Here you have to be or become independent (autonomous) to establish and run your own house/home. So, you have more independence or autonomy here. Because you don’t have your family here.

R: Do you think it is an advantage for women to come here?

J: Yes, certainly. They can work here. Actually, women are able to work (get job) even in India now, but I think that women have more independence here.

R: Do you think women also have more power in personal relationships…between husband and wife?

J: It depends on how the relationship and what kind of husband he is. If there is no respect between partners than it can be difficult.
R: What about decision making role for women?

J: I think there is more equality here for husband and wife to be partners, 50-50%. Here there is more understanding and talk between husband and wife. In India, it is husband who makes decisions.

R: Why do you think it is possible here?

J: (In Guajarati) First, the woman has or can get more independence (autonomy) here. They also have a voice, they get a chance to say what they feel and think. It’s not so much in India.

R: I wonder if it is also because you are generally alone here and don’t have that support for advice.

J: Right, you have to make your own decisions.

R: Ok. I think I have covered all my questions. Do you have any questions for me? Anything else that have come up for you during this interview that is important?

J: No, not really. I think the most important things is the language problem you face and the problem (and the worry) for me was “whether and how to maintain my sanskar in this country? What impact would the culture in this country will have on my children and will I be able to preserve my sanskar?” That was the biggest fear I had.

R: Do you think that these two concerns you had…do you think that other people who also came here during the same period, for them too these issues are most important?

J: Yes, I think so. It is a kid of fear that (Indian, maybe Guajarati) people of this generation (my generation) experience or feel.

R: People who came to the US after you (your generation), more recently, like my brother or me…

J: I think they don’t experience the same fear or worry about those things. That fear is less for them.

R: Why?

J: Generation gap. And the generation gap will increase with their (children of more recent immigrants to the US) children and they would (their children) will grow up in a more modern world (culture?) so their view (worldview?) will be entirely different.

R: So, for example, in contrast to A. and N., it will be very different for the child/ren of my brother born here. Because it’s a different generation and came from a different India?

J: Yes.

R: I think I feel the same way because the India that you came from and we did is different.
J: (In Gujarati) And it is significantly or completely different for those who come from India to the US now. They come from a modern and technology saturated world (India), their minds are more mechanical. So, they don’t believe in religion as much and don’t believe as much in sanskar, same with family. They will be very independent and individualistic, in every way. “I have my own mind and I will do whatever I want and choose the education/profession/job that I want or feel is right for me. I will marry who ever and if I don’t want to marry, then I won’t.” It will be even more like this for newer generations or this generation.

R: How do you think my or newer generation will deal with that? Respond to that?

J: I think it will be really difficult for you and new Indians. Because for you, you have to prioritize your job so you may not be able to pay as much attention (to your children), for example, my niece. Her child is in day care all day. So whatever sansakr he gets from the day care will be more. So, the sanskar that we are able to give ourselves in a young age or during childhood is not possible to do later. You know, it was said (by elders) that whether it’s a boy or a girl, you must hold them by their finger for the first 10 years. Once that period is over, they become stronger and whatever sanskar you are able to give during those 10-12 years take root. But here they keep their children in the day care when the child is only 3-5 months. It is likely that for the child the parents may not be that important any more.

R: You think this will be the big difference…

J: Yes, the impact of job and child rearing, difficulty in passing on and preserving our sansakr in our next generation. You know, thinking about that really saddens me and I don’t like it. If a stranger is going to raise your child; h/she won’t get any love and money is the most important thing for you, then why do you have children? Have a child only if you can afford children, if possible for you to leave your job for a few years, then do it and focus on raising your child. Because that is going to have a significant impact, on their sanskar.

R: I think, the economy and the world has become more difficult. It is not that easy to find jobs…

J: Yes, it will be your decision once you have a child, whether you want to do right by your child and love them. There will be consequences for that, but you will have to deal with them.

R: It seems that the decisions and choices that you and your generations of Indians made were different than more recent ones…

J: Yes, that’s correct. In some ways it is more difficult for recent Indians and they will have to deal with their own challenges and consequences.

R: Do you have any other questions for me?

J: No.

Transcript Note: She shared this after the main interview while showing me pictures of her family, mainly her children and photo albums.
While showing me old pictures of A. when he was in school and another of college.

J: Another picture with family and Christmas Tree…

R: Did you bring a Christmas tree every year?

J: I bought one, it was artificial and I would put it out every year.

R: How and why did you decide to celebrate Christmas? We don’t do it that much in India.

J: No…when A. was born and on his first birthday. He would be very happy when he say others’ tree. So, that’s when we bought one. Then once they started going to school, the school would be decorated for Christmas and he would tell us that “today they are going to put up the tree and are going to decorate with ornaments.” He would come home and tell us and ask, “when will we put up our tree?” So, then I decided to have a tree with different ornaments. That’s how it started. I used to do it every year, until they got older and went to college. Then, it was just us and I would ask them, “Do you want me to put up the tree or it’s alright?” They would say, “Why not?” I stopped in the last 3-4 years. I also put up different ornaments for other festivals, like for Halloween and a wreath for Thanksgiving. See, since we live in this country, we must make some efforts to adopt this country’s culture as well, whatever you think/feel is good for you and ignore that which does not suit you (which you think is bad. Translator note: ‘je kharab lage te ignore karvano). You have to watch out that you don’t lose your own culture and adopt their culture that is good (helpful, right). If the neighbors see your decorations, they also feel that even though they are foreigners, they are still celebrating and participating. In fact, I also like to decorate and participate in these. I feel that the country (this country) where we have lived for so many years; which has given us citizenship (made us citizens) and did not kick us out, but keep us and as a result (we were able to) achieve and do all these things….what if (it) did not allow us to enter (stay) here in the first place? Or if they had let us in, but then created problems for us, then what? So, we must have appreciation for that.

Transcript Note: This conversation also occurred following the main interview, while she continued to show me more old photographs of when she first came to the US.

I was not recording at the time, but while showing me a picture of her children when they were young, she stopped and started to tell me (it seemed that she really wanted me to know this and be clear about it.) It had, once again, to do with the issue of her children being raised in the US and their identification as Americans (unlike her). Since I don’t have the recorded material, it concerned her telling me that for her children “America, this country is everything. This is their home, since they are born and raised here. They are Americans.”

Following is the transcript of this ongoing conversation as I now start recording.

R: So, for your children, this country is home.

J: (In Gujarati) Sarvaswa e lokono ahyaan che. Their life, their everything is here. Education, everything. I feel sad about that sometimes, but that is the biggest adjustment for me, the biggest risk that we took (in coming to this country). So, you have to adjust with them, you should not show them your sadness (about) that “why you are not Gujarati (not seeing themselves as
Gujaratis). You should accept that and think why do they say/think that they are not Gujarati? Because they just not seen (our culture?). As they become adults (or as they mature) they may say that “Yes, I am a Gujarati” to make you feel better. That is also a big adjustment for them. So, you have to accommodate and adjust for them. If you adjust (accommodate) with them, are flexible with them, then they will also adjust (accommodate) you. So, you must (learn) to “let it go.” (Translator note: Let it go to karvoj padse.), especially when it comes to your children.

End of transcript.

Participant Two: Pradina

Reena (R): (In Gujarati) Aunti, let’s start with some concrete information first, that way, I can also do a sound check. Can you please tell me how old are you?

Pradina (P): 74.

R: When did you come to the US?

P: 1968

R: Are you married?

P: Yes.

P: And, tell me about your education, in India as well as here in the US?

P: Bachelor of Arts, from Baroda, India. My major was Economics.

R: And your occupation?

P: House-maker.

R: Do you work here in the US or have worked here in the past?

P: Yes, I have actually worked in the past, for two years.

R: Ok. Maybe during the interview we will get to talk more about that, your work experience here in the US… Who is in your immediate family?

P: You mean here in the US?

R: Yes.

P: We are two (husband and myself), son and daughter.

R: You have two children, a son and a daughter?

P: Yes.

P: Are they married and do you have grandchildren?
P: Yes, both of they are married and I have five grandchildren.

R: Where do they stay?

P: My son lives in Baltimore and my daughter lives in Portland, OR.

R: (In Gujarati) Let’s start now, can you share some of your background from India? How did you decide to come to the US?

P: (In Gujarati) We had a lot of friends who had already come to the US and were living here. So, we thought, “we will get to see it (US).” As a visitor we came.

R: Oh, ok. You came as a visitor?

P: Right.

P: (In Gujarati) So, originally where are you from in India?

P: We are from Baroda

P: So, did you grow up in Baroda?

P: Yes.

R: And you said you had friends who were already living here in the US, were these family friends or…?

P: (In Gujarati) No…these were college (university) friends and colleagues (of my husband)…entire batches of students had come to the US, together.

R: Oh, ok. What year…approximately 1964-1965?

P: It was…I think, we might have been part of the last batch to come. After that it all stopped, ECFMG⁶ and all that. It was the last exam.

R: So, this was the last year of your BA?

P: Not mine. It was, for my Husband. It was everyone, almost everyone from my husband’s batch, who had come the US.

R: Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

P: Well, we got married in 1963 and we came here in 1968.

R: Is he also from Baroda?

P: Yes.

R: Between 1963 and 1968 were you living in Baroda?

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⁶ It stands for Educational Commission for Medical Graduates.
P: For a while we lived in Baroda and then for some time in Indore, different places like that.

R: And your husband…. He is a doctor?

P: Yes.

R: And he trained in?

P: In Baroda as well as Indore.

R: Ok. So, it was from his batch…. 

P: (In Gujarati) Yes. There were many from that batch. So, they all took the exam, thinking, “At least, let’s try and give the exam and see what happens.”

R: (In Gujarati) What exam was this?

P: (In Gujarati) This was the ECFMG exam. You had to give and pass this exam in order to go to the US. It was the last year for the exam and then they stopped it. After that people had to go to London.

R: So, this exam was for medical doctors?

P: Yes.

R: Was this exam required by the US or India?

P: I think it was required by the US, but you had to take in India and only then you could go there.

R: If you passed the exam what could that allow you to do here in the US?

P: You could apply for and get a job in the US and once you have a job, you could come to the US.

R: So, this was job in a medical field, the exam?

P: Yes. You could work as a physician.

R: So, did you (you and your husband) plan to come to the US since you were married in 1963 or it happened slowly, over a period of time, or more suddenly?

P: I think that he might have wanted to come from the beginning, you know. At least, thought about it for a while, but others in his home (his family) did not want him to go. So, he postponed it a few times or (for a while), “I can’t…” His father says ‘no,’ they (Translator’s note: Aa na pade). Then when his father expired, then his mother said to him, “Ok, since you have thought about going (wanted to go) for a long time, you can go (now).”

R: Ok. Do you recall how you and your husband too the decision and the reason to come here?
P: Just to see and... (In Gujarati) (we) could see a foreign country and also could get experience (working, living) here, “how is everything here.” Because you would just come or even think about coming to the US that easily (just for sightseeing or as tourist).

R: So, in the beginning...

P: We thought, “If we get a job then we would go and as a visitor we would return in three years.”

R: Oh, ok. So at that time your husband gave the exam and he passed. You decided that you would come as a visitor and...

P: Yes, we came like that only.

R: At that time, as a visitor how long you could stay here?

P: For three years.

R: At that time...you had planned...

P: (In Gujarati) (at that time, when we first decided to come or came), we had always planned to return. We had come already with the plan to return, thinking, “It will be fine. We will see (experience) everything. We will see the country and since we (he) is getting a job, we would be able to manage (everything).”

R: So, initially came on a trial trip, “Let’s see if we can get a job...”

P: No, (he) already was able to get (secure) a job when we were in India, otherwise we would not have come.

R: Oh, where did he get the Job?

P: In Buffalo, NY.

R: So, when you came for the first time you came to Buffalo?

P: Yes.

R: Can you tell me how your husband was able to get a job here in India?

P: I think the information must be coming about job openings. Since so many people (from his batch) came here and were working in different places.

R: So, some of your husband’s friends, from his batch, were already here?

P: Not many from his own class, but many others who were his seniors. And, then a lot of his friends from his own batch, they all gave the exam together and came around the same time as him.
R: Once he passed the exam and secured a job, how did you prepare to come here for the first time, even for three years?

P: No, I did not come with him when he first came because only after he has come here and lived here he would be able to see if it is possible to live here with family or not.

R: Oh, when did he come?

P: In December 1967 and started (his job) in January 1968.

R: When did you join him?

P: I came in February 1968.

R: Oh, ok. So, he was in Buffalo, NY and started to work as a doctor?

P: No, as a resident.

R: So, when your husband left for the U.S., you stayed back and did you know when you would go to the US?

P: No, but we had been living together (in Baroda) and there were his other family member too.

R: So, you were living in a joint family?

P: Yes.

R: So, your husband was living, did you feel it was a risk or uncertainty?

P: (In Gujarati) Well, (we already decided) that “If we did not like it and if everything is not fine, we will come back.” So, it was never that we had to go. It would a one year (job) contract and you could return after that.

R: So, you were always prepared to return home if you did not like it there?

P: Yes.

R: Once he was over here, what happened next?

P: Then there were couple of other Indian residents, (In Gujarati) in the same hospital and with the family. So he knew that there is no problem in (living here) with family. They all had kids, one one and they were all living in the same quarters of the hospital, next to each other. So, it was not a problem of, “what would we do if we came here with family?” Because everybody had their wife and one one kid. So, there was no problem. SO, I came afterwards.

R: What kinds of things you and your husband were worried about before coming here? You said that he wanted to come here before calling you just to check?

P: Whenever we cannot feel like living here, if was one year residency program then if you like it then you go for next year sign also, so if you didn’t like it, just go back (home to India.)
R: Did you imagine what you may like or not like?

P: No, we had never been to the US so it was hard to imagine, although I (we⁷) knew that everything would be different.

R: How?

P: Since my husband was here, I knew.

R: How did you two communicate during that time?

P: No…it was not possible to communicate since I came within? 4-5 weeks, but he knew that there would not be any problem in living with family.

R: So, he observed and saw other families there.

P: Yes, they were working together in the same hospital and living next to each other as neighbors. Everyday together because every third night they are on call, they have to go together.

R: Right, so….he thought it would alright.

P: Yes, he (thought) there would be no problem (in living here) for a year and then we will see (what to do).

R: Ok. Once he told you that it would be ok…

P: No…he started processing also, the paperwork needed, you need bank balance for the visa…

R: How did he manage that?

P: The hospital helped him out by giving him that money since he was working there and had a contract with them.

R: Ok. So he got financial support from the hospital.

P: Right. So, within 4-5 weeks…he came December 22-23⁷. He had a good friend in Boston who came two years before so he came there first. So, he knew also within a week “I would like to stay or not.” He thought, “I may go back” even Because it is winter time, in December and it’s very cold. But the friend was very good, they were in the same medical college even in India also. Even he bought things for him, whatever he needs for winter and he said, “No, no. Just wait for a month or two or four and you will like it.” I mean, because before you don’t like anything right away just as you come. Because of the snow and the weather and everything.

R: So, it was a shock. It was so different. But his friend requested him to stay for a few months and then decide?

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⁷ For this interview, one dilemma I have is whether to use ‘I’ or ‘we’ as my participant either does not clearly use either of these pronouns or frequently uses ‘we.’
P: (In Gujarati) Yeha. (He said), “Please wait and see (stay) for a couple of months (Translator’s note: Be char mahina ubhpo rahi ja); start your job and see how you feel there (or like it there) and then you decide.”

R: Once he sent you all the paperwork and it was decided, tell me about that time for you? How did you prepare as you knew, even though temporarily, you would be living your family?

P: Well, it was going to be new experience. You always want to know that ok (In Gujarati), “Since you are getting a chance in another country, there is no harm in going and seeing. What trouble is going to be there (there is not going to be any trouble). My husband is there, our child is there.” I already had my son with me and he was four years old. So, once my husband did the paperwork, the visa and sent us the ticket, we came. It was not a problem.

R: (In Gujarati) Why did you and your husband decide to try here in the US, in a foreign country?

P: We wanted to see another country. Even when we live here in this country, we feel, “Let’s go (and) see Australia”. We go traveling every year. (In Gujarati) We go to South America, New Zealand, Europe. It was the same thing. We never will get chance and this way you get a job for three years on visitor’s visa, then “why not?”

R: Oh, so initially it was kind of curiosity that you will get to see a new country?

P: Right and since we were going to go (be) together with family so…

R: So, it was a combination of being an adventure and also an opportunity?

P: Yes, perfectly.

R: During that period did you two talk about all this, especially your future plans about being and staying in the US?

P: No, never. Until three years we never thought that we will stay here.

R: So, in the beginning the mind set was that we are here only for three years to see and experience (visit) this country?

P: Yes. We never thought about staying in the US because our visa was also for only three years. So, from the beginning we never thought or planned to stay here. We came thinking, “Since we are getting the visa, we will go for three years and see everything and the country.” We went to see Chicago, New York, other cities, whenever we had a chance, a vacation, we would go and then we will go back.

R: So, it was a combination of opportunity and like a tourist also.

P: Right. Just like that.

R: What was your family’s reaction about you coming to the U.S.?
P: (His) mother was really pleased (liked it or wanted him to go), it was only his father who did not want to send him and that’s why he could not come. But when his father expired, his mother gave him permission, (saying), “Since you wanted to go, you should go.” And since there were going to be others (other from his batch) with him, so, it was not like he was going to be alone. So, his mother always felt that since he wished to go, but his father did not allow, he could go now, “why not?”

R: Was he the first from his family to come to the US or you had other family here?

P: No, he was the first one.

R: And what about your own family?

P: Well, back then it was like once the daughter is married, whatever her in-laws (husband’s family) wanted (or wished to do), they did not have anything like, “go or don’t go.” Also, for them, “Since she is going only for three years…” So…

R: And, what did you feel once you knew that you were coming here?

P: I was happy to come but then again I was sad too to live the family because (In Gujarati) there was no one from my family (she is referring here to her maiden family, not her husband’s) (who was here) and even now you can say that there is almost no one. There are some, nieces and nephews, but no brothers or sisters. So, when you have to leave (them), then little…I mean, P: when (I) married, I had already left my family behind for four years. So, we knew that (In Gujarati) “Now…we are going only to visit and not to stay.” So, it was not that kind of shock. (In Gujarati) Not like ones (women) who come here right after they are married. I did not feel that shocked, because I had already left (already had experience of leaving my family through marriage) my family.

R: Right…you had once left your family when you got married and went to another family…

P: Right.

R: So, this was a little bit similar…leaving family and going to the U.S.?

P: Yes. It was not that kind of shock. (In Gujarati) (Not like) right now when some Indian men (Translator’s note: her word “chokarao”….not sure of using ‘boys’ as translation) who go (to India) to get married and women who come here right after that ⁸ (and the shock they experience).

R: So, the beginning 2-3 years that you spent living with your husband as his wife and his family in India also helped in dealing with leaving them behind and coming here?

P: Sure, exactly.

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⁸ I think what she means here is that women who get married and come directly to US, without having spent time with their husband or his family in India (like she did for four years)…she did not experience that kind of shock.
R: How was your experience dealing with paperwork for visa and such things?

P: I don’t remember that very well. It has been more than 40 years, you know. I think it was not that difficult because he had a job and he sent all the documents needed.

R: What about preparing your son to come here to the US?

P: He was only 4 years so it wasn’t that difficult and he was going to be with me and his father. Not for him, anything.

R: Once you came to Buffalo, how many years did you stay in Buffalo?

P: Three and a half years.

R: Maybe we can change track a little bit. Can you tell me a little bit about your experience of actually flying to the U.S., the flight over and how were those first few days or early period?

P: It was very shocking because when I landed it was this much (shows me with her hands…about a feet or more) and wearing a saris, you know and it was so cold. But they had nice nurses in the hospital. He didn’t have a car, even right away, but she was very good. She came to get us with him and he took the son, holding and I just went to the car. It was kind of shocking because it was this much snow and cold.

R: And you had not seen snow before?

P: No.

R: So you saw snow for the first time and saw your husband, not having a car…how was all that for you?

P: (In Gujarati) You see, all our neighbors had come earlier, started six months before (we/he did) and they all had cars

R: All the other Indian families?

P: Yes, so it was good help for everywhere we have to go. They always take us shopping and all these things. So, we never had got that problem and we all get together in afternoons and have lunch, everyday different food (at different houses).

R: So there were few Indians as a result of the hospital?

P: Only four…all four were in the same hospital. And all of us wives were at home (staying home) so we would take turns to do lunch at someone’s home. That way even the kids could play together. So, it was not like that hard that, “(In Gujarati) what will we do now, what will we do?” We were all together. (In Gujarati) Just as we are sitting here right now at about 10-11 am in the morning, once everyone is ready after their baths and breakfast, we would meet up with each other at about 10-11 am in the morning, once everyone is ready after their baths and breakfast. And we spent the whole day together at home; we cooked together and we ate together (we
would cook and eat together). We would all be together until 4-5 pm until (our/my) husband would come home. So, it was not like, shocking, shocking.

R: Oh, ok. Having that small Indian community made a lot of difference?

P: Absolutely, all the difference. None of them were Gujaratis; one was a Maharashtrian, one was a Sheikh…but they were all really nice and everyone’s children; someone’s (child) 6 months old, someone’s a year old, and one family had a son who was four years old, just as my son. So, we didn’t have any problems about these things.

R: Ok…How do you think or feel, having this Indian community helped you or supported you?

P: Well, since you have friends now, you don’t constantly feel, “Let’s go back (return), let’s go back.”

R: Looking back, you did not feel alone and did not feel you had to or wanted to return back to India.

P: No, not at all. And then there was a big university and other things as well there (in Buffalo) so monthly (they also showed) a movie.

R: You mean, a Hindi, Bollywood film?

P: Yes.

R: Which university was this?

P: State University of New York, Buffalo.

R: Ok.

P: They even organized other programs, (such as) for Indian festivals like 15th August. Whenever we can go, we go.

R: In Buffalo, there was a small Indian community as a result of the University and the hospital?

P: Yes.

R: How did you get connected to them?

P: (In Gujarati) We did not make as many friends at the University because (they were) mostly students, but we could go…so once in a month we could go to see the film; sometimes we go if there is some program (related to a festival). If you go then you feel that “there is (celebration) of our festival here.”

R: So, how did all of this helped with your adjustment there?

P: It became easy. After a year we/he changed to a different hospital. He got a different job and we changed houses, but I always got good neighbors.
R: American neighbors?

P: Yeha, American neighbors.

R: In what way they were good?

P: They were friendly. One has a child also so they play together also. Next place we went my neighbor was very good. She pushed me even, (saying or said to me), “Why are you sitting (at) home? Go to work. If you go to work, I will take care of your child.” Because she was not married or anything.

R: Oh, so she actually encouraged you to step outside the home and get a job?

P: Yes, right. So, then I went for some courses, for computer things and then I worked for Blue Cross Blue Shields for a year.

R: Oh, ok.

P: She was very good so I took a course for 3-4 months.

R: How would you describe those first three years?

P: I mean, it was not miserable or anything, ok. I was happy because I had very good neighbors. She was just like my older sister. She take care of me if I need it. She took care of my son also. I went for the classes and I went for the job and my son, he is very good. At his age he was very good. Our apartment was also like…the school (was) right opposite the house. So, he can go by himself. As soon as the bell rings, he locks the house and goes. He can come home for lunch also.

R: This is kindergarten or first grade?

P: Kindergarten, first grade, primary school, but you can leave him…responsible that he won’t do anything in the house. Plus the neighbor was in the same apartment building, next door and she is home and when he comes home, he says (to her), “ok. I am home.” He will call (her) and go to his own house; watch some TV, eat some snacks, do homework. Whatever he wants to do until I come home.

R: So, you wouldn’t describe the first three years as miserable, how would you describe them?

P: First year was a little bit because of this they (she means her husband and other doctors) have to work every third night and so they are not home. So, I had to adjust to that. But even then our hospital… first six months were a little away (hospital was farther away from where she lived), but next six months we were just living close to…so whenever he is on call, we would go to the hospital, sit in the lounge, watch TV there and by 9-9:30, he would walk back with us and drop us home. Then, he would go back (to the hospital). Then we go to sleep. So, it’s not like, really
miserable, miserable⁹ time. I mean, you miss your family. That’s a different thing, but otherwise it was not (a miserable time).

R: You said that sometimes you missed your family, can tell me more about that?

P: (In Gujarati) Because at that time you could not even call home. Miss them in the sense that there were no phone calls (you could not call because they were very expensive to do so). You could write letters, (but it would take) a month (for it/them) to get there and come back. So, you miss…your mother, parents.

R: And you lived with your family so…

P: Yes, so living alone felt different, more so because he worked all day and you are alone at home. But then I started working also.

R: You received a lot of support from the Indian community, neighbors, and friends?

P: Yes, a lot of support.

R: What about food? Did you experience challenges with food?

P: (In Gujarati) Not everything (Indian) was available at that time but we could receive parcels from India. So, they used to send it every six months, like spices and things like that.

R: From Baroda? What kinds of things you would get in the parcel?

P: You know, just our basic spices and all that. The rest you had to buy from here. (For example), you did not get our daal here, so we used to eat that ‘yellow split’ (lentil); we did not get (wheat) flour like (we do) today, so roti used to be red. It was different things, (In Gujarati) like vegetables, if you don’t get green chilies and cilantro, then you use dry, red chilies to make Kadhi. I mean, you make it by adopting. It’s not that big thing. At least, you can eat everything, whatever is available. (In Gujarati) If you don’t find our vegetables (Indian), then it is from here (vegetables available in the US). Even now, we don’t go to buy Indian (vegetables, dishes) patara and Indian beans every day. We buy cabbage, cauliflower, beans whatever is available in the grocery store.

R: How was that adjustment for you?

P: It’s not that hard. We get everything, not the Indian thing, but we always make… (In Gujarati) We could make Dal, bhat, shaak, rotli every day.

R: Did you miss Indian food, food from India?

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⁹ In Gujarati, some words are repeated, for example, here ‘miserable, miserable’ for emphasis. It is quite unique to Gujarati. Therefore, I chose to write it twice wherever the participant spoke in this way.
P: No, it’s ok. I am not that kind of… Even now it’s… being a Jain maybe or maybe I was brought up that way… it was not for me that, “Oh, I did not get this so I am upset. Oh, I did not get this so I am upset.” As long as I get food, that’s fine.10

R: At this point did you and your husband start thinking about the future and your plans?

P: (In Gujarati) No, no. Since he was a doctor, even if we returned (to India) after three years, he would get work (job) there. He used to work also there, in Baroda.

R: So, even at that time you did not think whether you would stay or return back?

P: No, we just did not think about returning back at that time, because we knew that he would get a job (In India, Baroda) right away if we returned. Since we also had a home there, we did not have to worry about having or buying a house. His mother was still there, so it was never that we had to look for a place (to live) on our return.

R: You had a home and a base there.

P: Yes, we simply did not worry about those things.

R: When you had to change apartments here, did you ever face difficulties with landlords, you know, being denied an apartment or something like that?

P: No, that never happened anywhere. Never because we were Indians or anything like that. We get right away. First they were provided by the hospital itself. We had to pay rent, but they were hospital quarters. Two bedrooms, nice apartments. I can stay even right now also after living in this house. Nice apartment, furnished apartment with utensils and everything. We didn’t have to buy anything.

R: What about your son’s school… how did you manage that?

P: First year, we did not send him to school at all because it was just the beginning, it was winter, and we did not have a car. It was not necessary. (In Gujarati) And here (in the US) children (start school) only at when they are five. I mean, you can do pre-school, but not every child has to.

R: Then?

P: After a year when we moved, the school was right across from where we lived. It was a public school and generally public schools tend to be really good anyways. Both my children have studied in public school only. We never sent them to private school.

R: Any difficulties when you sent him to school, since he was from India?

P: No, none at all.

R: How was his first few years at the school?

10 This one of the few occasions when she clearly uses ‘I’ and is talking about herself… her preference, feeling, thoughts.
P: Actually, he was very smart, so some people might think that… (In Gujarati) he is teacher’s favorite or pet, but otherwise… study wise he never had any problems.

R: And socially?

P: Sometimes some kids might do that?

R: Can you say more?

P: I mean, they talk something or they might want to hit or sometime or something, not always but sometime. So, I said, “It’s ok. If someone does that, you don’t have to do those things.”

R: Because of being different…

P: No, because he was kind of smart, that’s what I think not because of different, that he looked different or like that.

R: How did you handle if he had any problems at school?

P: His teacher would tell me that something is going on. You can talk to the teacher and that would take care of it.

R: So, he did not have any problems in transitioning to the school?

P: No. Actually he may have… instead of 18, he graduated at 16.

R: Oh, so he even graduated early from high school?

P: Right and he changed so many schools too.

R: Why did he have to change schools?

P: Because after three and a half years we went to Boston because then… that time the changed happened that anybody can happen greencards, as soon as you apply.

R: So, this was the new immigration law that was passed?

P: Yes, in 1971… end of 1970 or 1971 between. They wanted so many doctors here so they changed the law that anybody applies, they get it.

R: If you are a qualified physician and you apply then you get green card right away?

P: Yes, because some of, like our friends’ (inaudible word here) are there, they wanted to stay so they hired lawyers and paid money $3000 to get it. But we did not want to do any of these things because we wanted to go back anyway. So, as soon as this law came, we applied, “why not?”

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11 I think she is referring here that some her husband’s friends applied for green card within three years as they wanted to stay, but they did not as they did not want to stay.
R: I want to come back to this, but backtracking a little bit, I have a question about another issue. When you came here, in the beginning was language, English ever a problem or presented challenges?

P: (In Gujarati) Not so much, because (I studied English) in college, in Baroda. (We did not) use it as much, but knew it well.

R: So, you did not have that many difficulties with language?

P: No, no, I mean, you feel inside that… When you come, you feel that, “How am I going to say?” Because we are not talking in English in India. But it didn’t bother anything because that nurse and the dietician, I can say that she used to come to our houses also and she take us outside too and she wanted to learn Indian things too so she can make for all these doctors in the hospital when she is…the Indian things. So, she come to our house sometime and she says, “show me this one thing. How to make pulao, how to make upma or something. So, I can make one dish for doctors. So they can get Indian dish.” So, we talk to her and I never felt that I couldn’t talk speak anything.

R: So, from the beginning, you never felt… you said inside sometimes you felt…

P: Inside you feel that, “How am I going to…” Sometime I think “Oh, if she doesn’t come, good too. I don’t want her to come because I have to talk to her in English or something.” But when she came, it never happened that I couldn’t speak to her or she would not understand me or anything.

R: So, English and Gujarati were never a problem?

P: No, not much.

R: What about, when you went out to grocery, post office…?

P: It didn’t happen anything, even at work I never had any problem.

R: Oh, so you did not have any problem with language?

P: No, because they hire only six months as a temporary job, not as a full time, even right away. So I said, “That’s fine. Six months is ok for me. Because I will get experience.” Because I knew that I was not going to work all my life anyway.

R: Oh, ok. So, even at job you did not have problem with English?

P: No, no and I can wear my saris also. I never had to buy anything American also. They allowed to because there is one Indian Bengali girl was working there and she was wearing saris all the

R: So, you did not have to change your attire?

P: No, I never bought a one pant even, until we got the green card. I was always wearing my saris to work, even in snow and everywhere.
R: Did you feel different because of that? How did people react to it?

P: No. If they told me that I have to work this things otherwise I cannot work, then I would have bought it. Because I was going to go back, what I buy all these things and just for nothing.

R: So, you were going to go back home, so why invest in…

P: Right, right. I am not going to wear (those clothes) when I go home so I never bought any pant or shirts or anything until in 1971 after we got the green card.

R: How did you and your husband decide because green card means you were going to stay here and not going back.

P: Yeha, once… because in the residency there is not much pay scale, anyway so we cannot save anything. Whatever you get, you finish it. So, now you got a green card and residency is over, so you are going to get from $8000 to $28000. So, that’s the… why did we did all this residency in India and did it again here because we wanted to see these things. Now after you did again these things and we are going back again in the (with) zero (zero money or no savings). Since we have the green card, why not stay for a couple of years and make some money which we can invest there (In India or back home) and start good (in India or back home). So, that’s how it starts, you know, once you stay (pause)… then you say, “Let’s try…”) and son is older and he is in school and all these things happen, you know.

R: What things? Tell me more.

P: I mean, because he likes it here. He is in the 5th grade, 6th grade, 7th grade.

R: Right, so more difficult now to go back.

P: Right. Then you think, “Ok, why not stay for a while, then go back.” And that’s how everybody stays, I mean not everybody, but most of the people. They think that they will go back, they will go back, but…

R: Things change.

P: Yes, things change.

R: (In Gujarati) So, I think aunty, this is very interesting because I feel or think that this was not only in your case, but also for other people you knew…

P: Yes, (In Gujarati) it was the same, (it was the) same.

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12 Since until this time in the narrative, she is still going to return to India and not stay back, refers to India as home.

13 I think when she says “see these things” she is referring to seeing the country as they came initially.
R: You come for three years and give it a try since there is an opportunity available. You also had a positive experience with the help of the Indian community. If you had a negative experience or faced challenges, then you would even have returned…

P: Yes, yes.

R: Coincidentally the government introduced the new green card law for physicians and got that.

P: (Maybe it happened that way, the law was passed) because we were meant to stay (in the US).

R: First when you came, you wanted to get new experience and see this country, but once that law was passed, you also started to consider financial reasons…

P: Yes, definitely.

R: You would not have the same opportunity there (in India) as here.

P: (In Gujarati) Because we would have to start (from the beginning) even there if we returned. First and foremost you have to buy tickets for three people (to go back) and that’s expensive when you don’t have any money. Because whatever we saved, we traveled around here and staying in the hotel one week. Ok, we want to stay and see here, we don’t want to have money when we go back. That’s fine. Since we are here, see everything. So, there again you…when you get a chance to earn some money when you work so hard for these many years.

R: Since you have invested so much in the residency and you are getting another opportunity through the green card, then…

P: And now he can practice because he did his fellowship in Boston which he learnt and he can use it now and he can learn more and he can use it in India too. Everything, you think about.

R: (In Gujarati) So, now it seems that the criteria for you and your husband was changing in thinking about future and whether to stay or return?

P: Right. (In Gujarati) And some things that you can learn here, you can’t learn in India. Things that you can also use in India.

R: Right. Ok, so now you are thinking about future. Still, (In Gujarati) I feel that underneath you and your husband still felt that “we could stay a little bit longer and then return back.”

P: Right.

R: Even at that point (time, even after you had green card), you did not think, believe, or feel that you would stay here long term.

P: Right, absolutely.

R: Once you had a green care, where were you?

P: We were in Boston, that also (for a) fellowship. Then we go to Syracuse, upstate NY.
R: Oh, so you return to upstate NY?

P: Yes, first we were in Buffalo and then we went to Syracuse.

R: And, in Syracuse, your husband worked in hospital or private practice?

P: No, not in private practice, he worked in a hospital.

R: How long were you there and how was your experience of living there?

P: (In Gujarati) There too we made good friends. The person who had told us to go there (to Syracuse) she was an Indian ‘ben’ (lady, woman) and he (my husband) was looking for something, same patients also, each other, different city also so that’s why she said, “why not if you are looking then come here?”

R: So, an Indian doctor there in Syracuse said (to your husband), “why don’t you try here?”

P: (In Gujarati) Right. This is a good place and make sure you will get a job. So, we went there and they were very good friends (Translator’s note: she means they became very good friends), like three sisters, both married, one is not married, mother is living with them, so it’s like I got my family.

R: Oh, so you got another family?

P: Another family and I felt that this is my family. I go there from morning to night, even. I eat there. I bring a tiffin for my husband (from there) also when he is working late and I ….

R: So, you cook with them and you also….

P: They cook, I never cook with them, but I always ate there. My son also come from school there because there is university area so school buses are there. I get a bus also. He get bus after school, he can eat there. We eat there together. They play…because both (sisters) who are married, they both have a kid, same age my son. So, it was so much good that they play together. I have like, three sisters, mother.

R: So, you felt welcomed…

P: Yeha, yeah. It is just like my family. I…Sundays also I go to their house, we ate there and all the time we are there. I can always call that “I am coming there.”

R: (In Gujarati) And were they Gujaratis or…

P: No, they were Christians, South Indian Christians.

R: So, your transition to Syracuse also….

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14 Throughout the interview, I refer to participant as “aunty” and her husband as “uncle”. It is maybe because of cultural tradition and respect. Also, maybe Gujarati language where you call ‘masi’ or ‘ben’.
P: It was very smooth. We lived about 3-4 years in an apartment which about 1 mile from their house. So, I used to... always I volunteered, from day one when I didn’t work. Syracuse also I worked in the University for one year.

R: Oh, ok. Where did you work and what kind of work did you do?

P: As a computer thing. When that whole thing with Nixon-McGovern thing was going on, at that time I worked for the university. I worked as a computer key puncher operator.

R: How did you get that job?

P: (In Gujarati) Because I had worked not only in Buffalo, but also in Boston. As soon as I (had) moved there (Boston), I didn’t know anybody, actually. Our friend was living so far away, who was in Boston. But...our apartment also, they didn’t give apartment with kids. But one family who lived there in the apartment who was Indian and they had a kid and he moved. Then our friend knew them so he told them (the family that moved) that “my friend is coming so why not give them and they have only one son and he is very nice and quiet.” So, they gave us the apartment. Then, again I was looking in the 4th of July paper for the, like offers, what they have here, at least to see. And there was an opening one place. I said, “Ok, let me go for interview. What happens, let me see at least.” And they said, “you can come today, right away if you want to.” I said, “No. Because I have to find somebody who take care of my son. His school I have to see and school starts in September. So, I will let you know if I am coming or not.” Then, out super who take care of the apartments who lives next door and he had one boy, my son’s age and one daughter. They didn’t have any kids around to play so he was very happy. That’s why he gave us apartment too. So, he used to take his son to school and bring him back from school. So, he took my son to school and bring him back. So that was the thing that he would do for me.

R: So, you found someone to take care of him.

P: And after 3:30 pm also he has to... somebody has to (take care of him) until I came back because we didn’t know anybody around there. So, that time my sister-in-law came from India. So, we went to see, they were in NY. It was a July 4 weekend, so we went to see her because they got married in India when we were here. So, we went there and she had a problem with speaking English, just like everybody comes. So, she said...and my son is very adopted, any place he can stay. So, she says, “why not let him stay here and he can teach me English and he can speak Gujarati little bit with me and I will have little adjustment.” Because she just came and she didn’t know anybody either, just her husband, but nobody else. So, he... and it was five hours driving, so not much. But still we have to leave him. He was not that big, seven seven and a half (years old). So, we were not sure, if he would stay or not, I don’t know. She said, “Why not? Just let him stay for one week and if he doesn’t stay then you come and bring him back.” We called next week and he said, “No, I am fine. I am fine.” And he stayed. We said, “You will be able to stay there for two months?” He said, “Yeah, mummy. I will be happy with aunty. I like her.” So, I came back and I started working right away because he was there for two months. And the super told already that I will take him to school. Because it was not like... our house and school, he has to cross two big roads. So, I cannot send him on his own. But the super said, “I will take him and bring him back. He will be with my son until you come home.” Everything wherever I went, I found people who can take care of me and I am sure I will be as good as them,
but I cannot tell that for myself. But any place I went, I got good neighbors. So, it went for the whole year.

R: So, you could work for a year in Boston?

P: Yes, I worked for the hospital a whole year. That was a temporary job, they didn’t give me any benefits, but I didn’t need any since my husband had them. So, that was the work. In Blue Cross also they hired me for six months, but I… people can do, like a maybe 20 words or something, but they have 5 mistakes, but when I do, maybe 18 but I have no mistakes. So, they hired me again for six months. That’s how I worked there for one year. Then I went to Syracuse and I worked little bit there for six months and then I didn’t work afterwards.

R: Now, aunty you said that you had to move around for the first 5 years…

P: In Buffalo we moved and lived for 2.5 years, Boston we live 1 year and Syracuse we live for 4 years, so it’s not big thing. Plus my son was adopting everything. That was the main thing. If he is like a (pause), “I miss my friends” and start crying… it was if my daughter was there (born) at that time, she wouldn’t have done these things because she is different. She wants… everywhere she has to have friends, not changing much. She feel like emotional.

R: Because your son was able to adopt, it was easier.

P: Yeha. It was very easy for me because he never complained that, “Oh, why we are moving? Why I am going to have another friends? Why not same friends?”

R: (In Gujarati) And you also mentioned that everywhere you also found really good people, neighbors.

P: (In Gujarati) Very nice (good). Good meaning, really good (or nice). So far, even now I have really good friends.

R: So, because of that you did not have problem with transition?

P: Yes.

R: How did that help?

P: I got a lot of support. You don’t feel like you are missing. I mean, you know that you are missing your family, but I have all (of them). Here again in Pgh we are for 30 years. The Jain community here is just like a whole family. Everybody is for another; know what’s going on. Even my neighbors (right now) are all Americans. I never had any Indian neighbors, but they are like my own brother sisters. I never had any problem with anybody.

R: Even with your American neighbors you felt accepted.

P: Yes, accepted. Any time I can call my next door neighbor that I need a ride right away and he will come and (give me a ride) right away. I have not problems whatsoever.

R: How long did you live in Syracuse?
P: We lived there for seven years. (In Gujarati) When we bought a house there in Syracuse, there too we found many Indian friends. There was an Indian community there. There were at least 15 families, so we used to get together, for Navratri somebody’s house. For Diwali we eat together. Everybody makes things. So, it was good and one or two neighbor were just walking distance (from my house) so we used to get in the afternoons also. Eat lunches together, go shopping together. So, changes came, but we never had any problems and he got a friend too everywhere we went.

R: During this time what did you think about America?

P: People are friendly, I can say that. Even they are American, but they are good heart and they help you also. Even sometimes you can think your own friend, Indian won’t help, but they will help. Because they are good people.

R: By that time what were your thoughts…that you were beginning to form of America?

P: I mean, it’s a good country, I mean. You cannot say anything (negative?) about it.

R: So, you found that people are good, friendly, and supportive.

P: Yes.

R: Do you recall anything that was particularly challenging or difficult during that period for you?

P: No. Nothing like that whether financially, for my son, or even socially. Everything good, I mean.

R: Did you go back to India during that time?

P: (In Gujarati) We went back so many…I mean not to stay (permanently), only for 2-3 months.

R: During those few early years?

P: We did not go back to India for the or in the first five years and my brother-in-law and all came here too. After two years, one came for studying because of we were here. Then his wife came in 1971, I said (before who came to NY). Then another brother-in-law came in 1970. They all came by themselves first. One came on our thing, another came on his own student visa and their families all came so now we have all families here in New Jersey.

R: Do you think that since you and your husband first came here and stayed, they were able to also take that chance and come?

P: Sure, I mean, (In Gujarati) they would think about it only because of that because they came here to study and for that they need financial support too. That’s why I worked for two years (so that we could help them).

She almost answers it as if what she generally thinks of America and not just during that period.
R: So, you gave them financial support and encouraged them to come here.

P: (In Gujarati) In fact, their mother (my mother-in-law) only felt that since (we) have gone and everything is good (nice) there, let them go to do new things. She was always, “you can go.” And since we were here, financially…the second one who came here we gave him support even for his study for a year.

R: So slowly, you other family also came to the US and you could have that connection.

P: Yes, (In Gujarati) then all the family came here so you don’t feel too much that you are alone.

R: Aunty, you stayed in Syracuse for seven years. So you stayed there until 1980…

P: We came here (Pittsburgh) in 1979.

R: You came to Pittsburgh from Syracuse in 1979. How did you come here, to Pittsburgh?

P: (In Gujarati) That too in the same way. My husband met some doctors at a conference. They all go to same places. So, somebody met from here and they were just eating lunch together and he (her husband) said, “Now I finish my this specialty and…” he (the other doctor at the table) said, “Well, I have the same specialty and I am looking for some somebody, why don’t you come and see me and see how it works?” So, they just…through connection. So, that he (my husband) came. He sent a ticket (the other doctor in Pittsburgh), “why don’t you come and see and things and how we are working and what kind of things you like it.” So, he came to see and he liked it.

R: So, did he come to UPMC or…

P: No, it was private, in a private practice.

R: Oh, ok. So did he came to Pittsburgh first alone and then you came or…

P: No, no. He went for the interview and decided (everything or decided to take the job) so we moved here together in 1979 with my son and I had my daughter also with me at that time. She was 1.5 years old. She was born in 1978. We have 14 years difference between my son and my daughter.

R: Ok. Where did you live in Pittsburgh, in the beginning?

P: We lived in North Hills. We had a house there.

R: When did you move to this house?

P: In 1986.

R: How was your transition to Pittsburgh?

P: It was good because we had a good friend also. We came to stay with them for a week when we moved and were looking for a house.

R: Were there many other Gujaratis here at that time?
P: (In Gujarati) Some were there, not many Jains, but there were many. Right away we met…because Diwali is coming within two weeks or something so that there were temple dinners so went for the dinner and we met so many people. And their friends are our friends and then right away. Not that many people. So we knew five to six families right away.

R: So, you made connections here through your friend here.

P: Right.

R: And the temple was the Jain-Hindu temple or another one?

P: No, no. That temple was not there (was not built) at that time. It was built later on, in 1984.

R: Aunty you have live here for 30 years. And in America?

P: From 1968 so it will be 45 years this February.

R: That is long time to be here in America. What do you think about America after living here for so many years?

P: I mean it’s a good country. I like it anyway.

R: What do you like about it?

P: Everything is good. There is, of course, opportunity here, but we grew up almost more our life here, so again it’s a different. When we go there (India), it looks so different, everything.

R: You mean, ‘there’ meaning India?

P: Right.

R: You feel you spent more years of your life here than there in India?

P: Yes, right. But I still like to go to India even. And even I, if I have to settle down, I would settle down too.

R: Where?

P: In India also.

R: Do you still feel, given an opportunity…

P: Yeha, I could. It won’t be hard for me to settle down. Like some people say, “Oh, I go to India now, I cannot stay there. It’s so dirty; it’s so many people. I don’t think that way.

R: Why won’t it be difficult for you, you think?

P: Because it’s our own country, I mean. I feel that it’s my country. I can get adopted to everything there also. Because we have our temples there, our upashrays are there. I am kind of a religious kind of person too. So, I can have so many things to do there than here.
R: The religious community that is available there will make it easy?

P: Not the community, but the things you can do there, like if I want to go to, say, Palitana (a Jain place of pilgrimage), I can go and stay there for four months and something, what I want to do it. Here it is a difficult thing. So, that way I can adjusted and I can do things there also.

R: You said, “If I have to, I can adjust.” Do you want…is there still the feeling…

P: I mean, once we stayed here we did not feel like “once we have this or that, we want to return.” And, now there is no use too.

R: When did that change come about, when and how did you know that you would now stay here?

P: Once our kids had grown up and went to colleges, got married. Now, I mean there you go, you are there, you are not going to start practice or anything. Your friends who are there, they have gone all the way. Even they have stopped practicing (medicine). They have their kids with them, their daughter-in-laws are with them. We have our kids here. Our family is here. So, I mean, there…In a way there is nobody. Brother, sisters are there, but your family is here.

R: Everything that matters to me is here…

P: Right. If I go there, six months is fine, but then I have to be here for something. Reason my daughter wants or my son wants or even I want.

R: So if you have stayed there for six months, even you want to come back to the US?

P: (In Gujarati) Yes, you have to… you know how they say, “You are attached (have attachment, Translator’s note: ‘Tamne moh hoi.’).

R: What attachment do you feel to America?

P: (In Gujarati) Not for America, but your family has settled here (is here), so you feel that, “I want to…” See, it is the same way as when I had my family in India (she is referring to her maiden family, before marriage), I still feel (attached) that all my family…my mother is not there (is not alive any more) so the attraction is a little less. My brothers are there, but the attraction is not as much as before. The same way, if your kids are here and you like everything there, but (you will still have) attraction for (attachment) here will remain the same.

R: Your connection is here, your family is here.

P: More than having attraction (attachment) for America, it is that your family is here now (family lives here now).

R: Would you say your home is here?

P: (In Gujarati) of course it is. I mean, even if this particular house is gone (not there anymore), but my children’s home is also my home.
R: If I were to ask you what (where) do you consider your home, what would you say?

P: Actually we don’t have (a) home anywhere (Translator’s note: Actually to ek pan ghar nathi apno). According to our religion we say that we don’t have anything of our own. We have to leave everything (behind), from here (U.S.) as well as there (from India). But, since we are attached (Gujarati word is ‘moh’ have attachments to family and worldly things), since our children are there, we want to go to our children. Even with them, we are not going to stay permanently (or forever).

R: (In Gujarati) You know, I have lived here for 10 years, yet sometimes when I am talking about India, I say, “That’s my home.” What/where do you consider home?

P: (In Gujarati) Now (right now) this only feels like home (this is home) since we are not living in India, how can I (we/you) feel that is home? Maybe if we were to return and settle there and stay there for a year or two then maybe I can say, “This is my home now. I don’t have this home anymore.” (she is referring to not having her home in the US here). But right now, this is my home (this is where I would call home). Not even the home/s of my children is/are my home. No matter where I go…I just returned from staying at my daughter’s home (as) she had a boy (delivered a boy) (Shows me pictures of grandson). I went and stayed with her, but after 15 or so days I started to feel, “If you (her daughter) don’t need me here anymore then I want to go back to my home.”

R: In a way, after staying here in the U.S. for 45 years, would you say that this country is your (has become) your home?

P: (In Gujarati) Yes, I do feel that way. It’s true.

R: What about India? What is that (for you)?

P: (In Gujarati) But that is (India) is our motherland16, so that way it is ours (Translator’s note: It is our home or it is called our home. “Ae to apnooj kahevay ne.”). That way that’s my home. Even now you feel that, “It’s my place (Translator’s note: Ae mari jagya che.” How to translate ‘jagya’ here? As ‘place’ or as ‘home’?)” Even if I have to go to India for something now (right now), I feel that since they are building this hospital here, I want to give 2 lakh rupees because I want to help them because that’s my home and that’s what we do all the time we go…They are building new wards at the Baroda Medical (hospital) so we gave $10,000-$15,000 because from there we came here. They have given us all this. (In Gujarati) (we were able to) study, they gave us knowledge, so we have an obligation to them. So that way it’s my home.

R: Oh, I see, although I have lived here only for 10 years and don’t have as much experience as you do and maybe even not struggled as much…

P: (In Gujarati) I think you don’t have that many struggles (challenges). Our children did not have to go through any struggle (challenges/difficulties). They have a silver spoon in their mouth. Because they have studied here (where as) we also had to (wanted to, needed to) save

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16 I was not sure, during transcription, whether to capitalize ‘motherland.’
money; we had to support our parents. They have everything. They are doing ten times better than us.

R: You think they have silver spoon in their mouth?

P: Yes, right. Everyone’s children…children of all Indians (immigrants to the US). They all had much much better life than their parents.

R: Was it part of the reason you stayed here as well?

P: No, no, no. We never thought that way that (In Gujarati) “their life will become really good (nice, they will have a really nice/good life and that’s why we should stay.” (We stayed) Because we got the opportunity and we struggled so much, then why not take a little advantage.

R: Aunty you visit India regularly, from time to time. Over the past 40-45 years, how do you think India has changed? In what way and your experience of visiting India, has that changed?

P: You mean family life?

R: Family life, financial, social…

P: (In Gujarati) I think (people have) improved greatly economically, in their standard of living. There are lot of opportunities for everyone and people like you who come here (to the U.S.) now (to study) want to return back (go back to India) because they have lots of opportunity there.

R: That way you feel that things have changed?

P: Yes, lot of because (In Gujarati) some people who have come here from my family try here for a month two months but there was so much…no jobs. There was…two years back even. So, they thought “we will try for 2-3 months and that’s it.” They have spent lots of money studying 2-3 years CA and here and they took their degrees and everything and their parents said, “why don’t you come back? There is lots of things here, why do you have to stay there for nothing.” And they got beautiful job, in Delhi; somebody is here, somebody there and they have opportunities everywhere. So, luckily they think that “(it is/was) a good thing” that they came back and (they don’t think that) it was a bad thing that they did not find a job here.

R: In that way it is really opposite of when you and your husband came.

P: Yes, so much opportunity there now. I hear so many other people… (In Gujarati) People who have come here from India to study, I think they want to go back right away. That is a big difference.

R: More recently when you visit India, how do you feel?

P: (In Gujarati) Actually, whenever I visit, I stay with my family only and our family is much much advanced from day one. Nobody wanted to come here. Even we were here…I can even say that they are all settled (my other family members in India) much better than me. Why would they come here? They have servants, they have cooks. They have beautiful houses…so for my
family quality of life is very good. Now, this is not the case for all families, some families are struggling too. They don’t have much.

R: When you visit, do you feel like you have come home or that I am just visiting and will go back?

P: No, I don’t feel that way. I feel I have come home because they are all my family, my brothers my sisters. They love me. They want me to go there and they will treat me like I am in a five star hotel. So, why wouldn’t I feel that this is my home. But, you know that you are not going to stay here all the time, you have to go back to your home.

R: And how has India changed over the years, you talked about more opportunities there…

P: (In Gujarati) It is very crowded. The population has increased a lot. Compared to earlier times (before) there is more cleanliness now, I mean they are not throwing everything out like before. They know that they have to keep food and everything there. So, it’s getting better that way too.

R: Do you think about India that you left in 1968, that India and India now?

P: I remember (recall) that India from time to time (Translator’s note: Yaad aave) because you stayed there and you remember everything about how you lived there. But I had a happy time there also, I mean. It’s not like I had any struggle with my in-laws. I lived with them for 4-5 years after I got married. And in my house (maternal house) I was the youngest one and here (in husband’s family), I am the oldest one (oldest daughter-in-law). With family with brother sisters and they were all good to me and I was also…I had no regrets ok that my mother-in-law was like this and treated me like this and she was not good to me. So, I always talk to my mother-in-law much more than even to my mother if I have problem. So, I had…I never had any problem. Plus, I am that kind of a person I can live in $1 also and I can live in $100 also, same way. Doesn’t make any difference much to me, as long as I have peaceful life, people are good to me. I don’t care that I have money 10 million in the bank. I can work with only 2 rupees and that’s all I need.

R: Aunty, let me ask you this. Your son was really young when you came here and your daughter was born here. Both of them are raised here and have grown up here. How is your experience of raising children in this country and making/building a family?

P: (In Gujarati) I didn’t find it that difficult, especially with my son I especially didn’t feel that way (that it was difficult). With daughter I felt it sometimes because it was fourteen years difference (between them). It’s not like (because of son or daughter), but it was because the time changes so little bit they want to do something which we don’t like it. They want to stay out a little bit longer and we don’t want to but that’s the way here it is. If we say, “Ok, come home 8 o’clock. We don’t want you to be out after 8 or 9 pm.” The party starts by 8 o’clock. How can you say, “No?” because other kids they work. After school too they have to work to make money and do things. So, they all have to get together for fun, anything. Like we socialize they have to socialize too and they start by 8 or 9, how can you say that “you cannot go after 9?” So, it is kind of… a little bit in your mind that, “Is it good or not. Should we let it do or not?” But you have to.

R: What were the things you were worried about?
P: Because they come late. What kind of friends…even we know that she is going with somebody but then there will be other friends there will be too. You don’t know what is going to happen. Even she is good but you know what happens. Somebody will do anything to you and you don’t know even. So, you kind of little bit worried. Little bit that ok, “should we let them go or not” but you cannot control those things.

R: What do you think of the way of raising family here, the cultural values which are different? How did you adjust to that?

P: Actually it helps with the temple and everything because they have gone to the Sunday schools here. So, they learn little bit all this, our culture, our religion, our stories. So they…plus how we live in our house.

R: What do you mean by that, can you say more?

P: Like our living is different than this American people, little bit, right? So they (her children) know our values and our things so they don’t do what we really don’t want them to do, but in our mind, inside it says, “Is it alright? Everything will be going ok or not.” Because sometimes you hear some of these things, you know. So, you worry little bit, but otherwise it’s not…

R: I wonder how being and living in American values and culture outside of home, at school, college, social life and different Indian culture at home…how that impacts them and how did you handle it?

P: We used to discuss sometime and it was not much. They know our values. That’s what I think. They know what we like it, what won’t like it. But otherwise we can’t tell that ok, our kids that don’t go with American; don’t do that because Indians are always good. That is not the case in here.

R: What is the case?

P: Because they all do things. Indian kids also do the same things as American. They drink also (alcohol) because in house it’s not allowed so they do more even sometimes. So, they know, our kids also know even it is American or Indian but what is good for us and what is not good for us. So, that’s why they don’t think that “ok, that we have to be with just Indians and not Americans. Whoever is good; we know what we want, our ideas should be the same. How to raise the family? How to live?” (In Gujarati Because in Indian families it is different. Usually, In India there is more male dominance (whereas) here it is mostly equal. So there is difference in that as well. So, they have seen our life also, they have seen their (American) life also and they study all the way higher education so they know what they want in their life. So, they are not thinking, “Ok my mom likes this and my dad likes this, so I have to do this.” They are kind of free in their mind that what they like it is Indian or American, doesn’t make any difference to them.

Here, I can sense my hesitancy to say ‘right’ or agree with the participant when I am called upon to agree with her implicitly by that ‘right?” at the end…assuming that I would know what she means and also agree with her. Partly because I wanted her to elaborate on her own words. But I clearly feel torn as she ‘hails’ me and identifies me as one of her own.
R: How do you think they have managed to adopt that, accomplish that? Both being Indian and American?

P: I don’t think I can really know how because when we talk to our kids and other our friends’ kids and they all tell that, “Don’t think that your kids asking for...what you are asking for Indians, just go with Indians. Not with Americans, not friends with them, don’t go eat with them, don’t get married with them.” It’s not going to work because you have brought (them) here. They are studying with them. They are same with us, (In Gujarati) whether Indian or American. It makes no difference to us. For us, our values and their values have to be the same (similar). So that’s how they do it. It’s kind of Amazing to me also because I don’t know how they do it.

R: You think that they have managed to take both Indian and American values to shape their life and personality...

P: Right, right. So, it might be very hard for them too to please parents and their do things their own way. It is hard, I mean. I can imagine it must be going through their mind also, those things.

R: How did you and your husband handle that? Deal with that?

P: But you see that how happy they are, you have to accept it.

R: How did you accept it?

P: (In Gujarati) Both our children have married Americans.

R: How was that for you and your husband?

P: First time it is kind of hard for you but you don’t want this thing, but it happens and you see that they love each other. (In Gujarati) If you force them and don’t allow them to marry, they might agree. (And then) if you have them marry someone else (of your choice), it is likely that they might not get along. Then what are you going to do? Then they are going to blame you. It can happen.

R: So, first time when you son told you that he would like to get married to an American...

P: Yes, first time it’s a kind of shocking but you have to give them little more time and see how it works. Give them 2-3 years and still they are together, you can’t say, “No.”

R: Is that what you and your husband thought?

P: Yes, that’s what we always thought that if he likes it, wait for a while; see how it works, still you are together; you like it, we will be with you. We are not going to oppose and go in the other way. Some parents do that. They don’t talk with their kids for a year or two even. Finally, they do anyway. They have to give in, otherwise you are going to lose it.

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18 I think it is a bit confusing here, but I think that what she is saying is that it makes not difference to them as parents whether their children are Indian or American and/or both, but what is important is that our values are same.
R: The choice is you support them and see how it goes or you might lose your child?

P: Yes. That’s what it happens to so many friends here. We have seen it.

R: So, you made the choice that….

P: Yes, I mean if he likes it, they are in the same category, they are same brilliant people, they know what they like it…I mean, in your mind you always think that (In Gujarati) “More Americans get divorced.” So, you worry, but there is nothing you can do about it. It’s going to happen… (In Gujarati) so many Indian (married) couples (also get divorced). If you treat them nicely, they might be good to you.

R: And how has that been (to have American daughter and son-in-law)?

P: It’s very good. (In Gujarati) My son is now married for 20 years. We go to their places, they come to our place. We go together for any trips or anything. I mean, it’s definitely different, but it’s not bad anything. Unless they love each other, why…what’s wrong with that?

R: Did you ever imagine that your life here would be like this, unfold in this way?

P: (In Gujarati) No, how can you know such a thing. Back then there were hardly any Indian children going/studying in college. So they didn’t have many Indian kids in, I think in the whole class there might not be one Indian girl or a boy. These many years ago. (In Gujarati) So, they would meet all Americans only. So, I mean they work together all the time, group discussions, group things. So you might like somebody. How can you avoid those things?

R: In some ways you weren’t prepared for it, but when it happened…

P: We were not prepared at that time, but I am telling you that if it’s going to happen to anybody. But the first thing happens then it is shocking to you that it happened, but there is no choice anyway. (In Gujarati) As far as worrying about it is concerned, it is only about “what if they don’t get along and something happens?” But generally (Translator’s note: Aam to) they are good together and they love each other, it works good. Fine. Nothing to worry about for 20 years. After that so many, 50% person kids’ are married to Americans.

R: Oh, so more recently many children of Indians of your generation have and are married to Americans?

P: (In Gujarati) Nowadays nobody says “no” or are shocked because they know that this people happened (this person’s child is married to an American), this people happened, “why should we have to fight about this thing?” If they want it, why to fight. Because after fighting again you have to let them do what they are going to do. So, that’s what it is.

R: Aunty you have been staying here for all these years and you are a citizen. If someone were to ask you, “who is P.ben?” what would you answer?
P: (Pause) “who are you?” (You mean) are you an Indian or an American? (In Gujarati) It would be apparent to (obvious) to them, they would know (who I am) right away that you are Asian, you are an Indian. I mean, nobody asks you that at least.

R: What about your own self…how do you think about yourself (your identity)?

P: You are Indian anyway, I mean you cannot say, “I am an American.”

R: You won’t say, “I am an American?”

P: How can you?

R: What will keep you from saying…you are a citizen of this country…

P: Yes, but still you are (In Gujarati) Indian born (you are born in India) and you (I) have grown up in India for all these years (your early years), your first 30-35 years of life have been spent there. How can you say that…It’s correct that we (I) are citizen. (You/I) can say Indian-American, but you can/will never say only ‘American’ (that I am an American).

R: So, even when you think about who you are, you see yourself as ‘Indian-American’ and not as ‘American’?

P: No (In Gujarati)! (I will never) say “(I am) an American”, (At least) I will never say that. I don’t know about who other people say…nobody will say, I think, maybe somebody might.

R: So, by law you are an (American) citizen, but when it comes to your identity and personality you are Indian….

P: And everybody knows. Even we go any places they know that we are Indian. Nobody is saying that…

R: It seems that what you are pointing out is that just by looking at you, others know (identify) you as an Indian?

P: (In Gujarati) They will never see (identify) me/us as American. They will know right away that we/I are not Americans.

R: How do you think they are able to know that or identify you?

P: From the color of our skin, (In Gujarati) our dressing…you don’t wear pants everywhere. They know, I mean. They know.

R: Where does your Gujarati and Jain identity fit, aunty? How does that fit?

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19 Asks to clarify
20 I am not sure who she is referring to here by ‘them.’ From the context it appears that it may be ‘Americans’ or non-Indians.
P: (In Gujarati) Well, divisions come about (divisions appear, Translator’s note: ‘Ae to pachi division padi jata hoi che.”) Now, if you go somewhere and four South Indians are there and even if you are sitting there, they will talk in their own language. It automatically comes that…not that they want to insult you or anything, but naturally comes. If there is one Gujarati and one South Indian. You know that she does not know (understand) Gujarati, she might not understand. You try to speak in English too, but still again… like, there is always some English mixed in even if you try to speak in Gujarati.

R: When are you a Gujarati, when are you an India?

P: (In Gujarati) You are a Gujarati, when you are with other Gujaratis. Otherwise when you go somewhere else, how could you talk as a Gujarati?

R: At those times, you are an Indian, Indian-American…?

P: (In Gujarati) Of course (I am) an Indian. (Being an) Indian comes everywhere (is always part of my identity), but if you are with other Gujaratis, (for example, you are at a) Gujarati Samaj dinner or at a Gujarati play or at Garba for Navratri, then you are Gujarati. But now other people come even (for those Gujarati occasions). Everything is mixed now.

R: How do you think of yourself as Gujarati, Jain, Indian, American?

P: Indian (In Gujarati) First Indian, of course.

(In Gujarati) If someone asks what is your religion, you say, “I am Jain.” Or if your behavior….if you don’t eat some things and you say, “I don’t eat it because we are Jains.” That’s when you have to say that. We went for a meeting and weren’t going to eat meant, so they asked me why don’t you eat meat? “I am Jain and I don’t eat meat.” That’s it. Otherwise you are Indian. They know also that you are an India. So, it depends on the context and who you are with. You are Indian first and then everything else comes.

R: Aunty you have talked a little bit about religion. In the beginning when you came Jain community was small, how has that been impacted, how has that experience been for you?

P: (In Gujarati) You see, if whatever you have been doing for years, for that you can do (pursue that) on your own too. You don’t need anybody else.

R: Oh, ok. How did you adjust?

P: (In Gujarati) You have the idol (statue of your God) at home. In fact, there was no statue (idol in the beginning), just a photograph. You always first pray in the morning if you don’t eat without praying (pray to the photograph, if you don’t have the idol); If you have the rule of doing the Samayik, then no one can stop you. You just do it (on your own).

R: When there was no Jain community available, you continued to observe your religion at home.

P: (In Gujarati) Yes, in Syracuse, I knew Pratikraman and everything. So, we didn’t do it every day, but I would do the Savatsari pratikraman by myself from a book. When a friend’s mother
came (was visiting) from India she wanted to do it but said that, “I won’t be able to do it here since there may be no one here who knows how.” And she did not know how to do it since not everyone does. So, (the friend to her mother) that, “No, I have this friend who does it and I will ask her if I drop you off to do it.” And then next year, that friend herself also came to do it, “I don’t do it on my own ,but since you did it with my mother, I will come and join you.” Then another family joined us and we were six of us then.

R: That way you adjusted and preserved your religious identity?

P: Yes, and then we came here (Pgh). The temple was constructed later, but there was a small temple at that site where the community center is now located. Back then all the Jains would get together (at the time of the Paryushan festival) and would eat Shrkhand and Puri for lunch on occasion of Mahavir Jayanti and would do the Savatsari Pratokam in the evening. Now, that is not right for us.

R: So, did you adapt to that?

P: No, no, no. We did not know about it the first time we went. (In Gujarati) But I said, “This will not do that in the morning we eat (a sumptuous meal) and do the pratikaman in the evening.” I have to do some fast or something and at least I don’t eat these kinds of things. So I said, “Next year I am not going to come for pratikaman like this.” Then when (we) were talking to others about it, they said (or we found out), “there is no one here who knows how to do all these (religious rituals etc.) appropriately and in the right manner and would show us how to do it.” They also did not know how to do everything, so they were trying to do whatever they knew and in whatever way possible with everyone (the community). At least, that way some of our Jain rituals and traditions would be carried out and take place. Then everyone said, “If you do it and show us also how to, then we will do it with you.” That way I started to do it and show everyone too. And slowly first there were 15-20 people like that for many years.

R: You have raised your kids here. Do they know Gujarati?

P: Yes, I used to teach them at home. For my son, whenever he had summer vacation for two months, I had Gujarati alphabet books and I used to teach him at home. He can speak and he can write.

R: And your daughter?

P: (In Gujarati) By the time she was born, the Sunday school here had started so we used to take here there. There was one in North Hills too and then at the temple.

R: Do they speak with you in Gujarati?

P: (In Gujarati) You know, my mother-in-law stayed here for 16 years. Not just at my home, but with her other sons who are here as well, but she would be with us for 3 months at a time and so they (my children) had to speak in Gujarati only with her (because she did not know any English). And when we/I would write letters (to my family) in India, they were required to write a paragraph or two in Gujarati too.
R: Why was it important for you and your husband to teach your children Gujarati and about Jainism?

P: (In Gujarati) you must know your own language. If you go to another country, you can learn Spanish and you can learn French, but you must know your mother tongue. You would look like a ‘doba’ (Translator’s note: Gujarati word is ‘doba jeva lage’, not sure how to translate it.) if you go to India and don’t know Gujarati. (If you don’t know the language) then you can’t read the boards over there, you can’t talk to your own grandmother. Children there would be speaking so much (in Gujarati) and someone asks your children and they would take 15 minutes to answer the questions, then what good is that? It wouldn’t matter, even if they are 100% smart. That’s why it was necessary. That way they could also talk to their grandmother.

R: So for you teaching your children Gujarati was important not only for language sake, but also to maintain connection with family?

P: Yes, of course. It is absolutely needed for that. How else you would communicate with your parents?

P: (In Gujarati) It was absolutely necessary and important to teach them Gujarati. I have taught my son everything as there was no Sunday school at that time. He learnt when we go to India, (it was) just like home, never felt anything different.

R: What about religion (for your children)?

P: (In Gujarati) (They don’t have as much connection or attraction) to religion as it wasn’t so easily available to participate at that time. And kids are often times in school when you are doing some rituals, prayers at home. They understand that this is our God and how to pray. And now they read everything, religion about. Read all the books. So, now more, but not as much at that time. Now they want to know about every religions and how they differ from each other and what is in each of them. In Jainism, Sikhism, and Christianity. They pick and choose (to believe in or practice or incorporate) whatever is good in each religion. You don’t force anything once (they) are grown up, but as a human being they are more mature and more, I think, they have more feeling for other people. In spite of being religious, sometimes we don’t feel compassion, but they do more than we do. They compare everything from each religion and adopt whatever is good in their life. It’s not just the knowledge, but they live their life that way. So, that I think that’s a very good thing. Because we people just do the religion, but we hurt somebody’s feelings too and we don’t know it. They don’t do this. That’s a very good thing. All the young kids, I see they are, I mean, they really respect their parents. They will even (In Gujarati) stop the car in the middle of the road if they see a needy person and give a dollar whereas we will not do that. See, they have learnt good things. That’s what I think.

R: They have not just learnt about our religion, but have also adopted from other culture.

P: Yes, they have done it.

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21 By ‘you’ here she is referring to her children and when they go to India.
R: Aunty, if someone like me, a young person is planning to come from India to the US what would tell her about US, how would you describe it to them and what advice would you give her/them?

P: American culture is good, but still in my heart (I feel, I believe) if you have good opportunity in India and your family is there, that’s a more…because when you get older and older, you will feel that… (In Gujarati) the (family connection and care) that can be there (In India) between, (say), mother and son. I mean, I know that it is not there in all families. There too, some don’t care for their parents. So, I am not…I have seen those things too. But I have not that kind of family. They have much more connection with each other. (In Gujarati) Here, your children may become (have to live) far away from you because of their jobs, and are not with you (can’t live close enough to you). Whereas there mostly everyone is together (are living close by). Not in the same house like a joint family anymore. They don’t have to. But in the same city. They don’t have to stay together in the same house. They are all mature, earning good money. Why they have to stay together and your feelings for each other is better (nicer or increases) if you live separately. Here everyone is (has to live separately or father from each other) because it is very difficult (or nearly impossible) to find (job0 opportunity in the same city or town. So your family is spread out. The closeness you feel (with your family) when they are all living close by is not possible when they are in a different city, because of the distance.

R: So, you would advise that if you are getting an opportunity in India then stay there?

P: (In Gujarati) Yes, I still feel that way. I don’t know if that is right or wrong. I feel that if there is very good opportunity and if your family background is also good, your relations too then later on in your life will be better.

R: Please correct me if I am wrong but as you have gathered all this experience of living here for so long, you feel that it might be (better) in India?

P: It is likely (or possible) that it will (would) be better in India.

R: Hmmmm…

P: Not for us right now, I am saying. (In Gujarati) Because I see a lot of young people here now who have been working for five years but they are telling that next year we are going back. I have seen (met) many people like that. They came here in the last five years and they say that, “they want to go back.”

R: Why do you think they want to go back?

P: (In Gujarati) Because they have good family background there and have many relations (family relationships) and they have opportunity there too, so why to stay here?

R: Because here it is not your country, not your family….

P: Right, exactly. (In Gujarati) Because I have seen many families, even Jain families. They are young and have come here. They are also doing residency and have just had a daughter, but they are telling that, “they want to…” They might not go and stay back like us, but their plans are like
that they might go back in a year or so. If you stay for a longer time (period) then you might stay (forever). Rather they have parents there, uncles and aunts there and all other family is there. There is opportunity there. (They think that), “Let’s learn everything here and then we will go back.” More recently I have seen many people, by ‘many’ I mean, even few people…I know about a few in the young generation who have gone also.

R: I have one more question aunty. When we started to talk you said that wherever you have lived you have always had very good neighbors…

P: Good means really very good.

R: And your son and daughter have married Americans and they are also very happy. What about your relationship with other communities who also live here, such as Asians, Hispanics…?

P: Even in Americans (with Americans) 20-25% they are like us. Their family life is also very good. With the kids and they have long marriages and everything too. It’s not like everybody has a bad life, but more percentage wise, it happens there.

R: You have some connection to Caucasian Americans, what about with other communities who also live here?

P: Not many, like Chinese.

R: What do you think about other people who also live in America? Because America has also changed in the past 40 years. How has this country changed?

P: Not much, I think. (In Gujarati) They continue to maintain family bonds and it is important for them. To their parents… even if there are eight children and they stay separately but they still take care of the parents. They do it. For example, all my neighbors were old ladies, but they all had good families. They are living (by) themselves, but the kids come and take them to shopping, take them to hair saloon, for dinner. Many families are like that. Even young people are like that.

R: And what about other communities…

P: I haven’t had too much contact, but I think they are good too because (In Gujarati) just like us, they have also brought their ‘sanskar’ from their own country with them to this country. For example, Chinese are (have) very close-knit families. I am sure they must be…

R: So they bring their values…

P: Right, right. They have brought their own values.

R: People from all parts of the world have come to the U.S. and continue to do so, does that make this country unique?

P: (In Gujarati) Yes, it is quite unique. Everyone comes here and everyone gets an opportunity and they treat everybody as if, like a… (In Gujarati) everyone has freedom (independence) to
take the opportunity as long as you have the talent for it. No one will stop you. That is a good
thing about this country.

R: Aunty I have asked all the questions that I need to ask and you have answered them very
openly. So, I am very thankful.

P: No, I think it’s good that you are interested in this topic and it was good for me to talk about
this too. We talked about everything including kids, how they did it. (In Gujarati) That’s why I
say that in this country…they have mixed together everybody so they (again referring to
children) have nothing like this is Indian we have to meet with this. Even if you try Jain (with)
Jain, it doesn’t work. Indian-Indian doesn’t work. It’s not like that all Indians are successful and
all Americans are bad. We have so many Jains even, not just Gujaratis (where) kids are married
to Americans and they all had a…I haven’t heard anybody’s divorce even. Even for those who
were married to American before my son did. They are as happy as Indian-Indian. They have no
problem. We just have to wish that whether it is Indian-India or Indian-American, they are happy
can live happily).

R: Aunty you came here as a wife and you are a woman. Do you think your adjustment of living
here in the US is/was different as a result of being a woman and different for your husband?

P: I don’t think so.

R: Do you think women have to face more challenges or men or…

P: I think it is the same for both because everyone has to learn as they know that they will be
living by themselves and have to do everything by themselves. So, these days, both men and
women are better prepared. They take classes even and learn everything. I met some Jain girls
here and they say, “I didn’t know anything so I learnt before coming.” They know more about
Jainism than even I do. “I didn’t know how to cook this vegetable, so I called my mother and
asked her.” They have learnt the religion inside and they figure out, adopt, and find out from
somebody how to follow it here. If they want to do it, they find out if there is a temple, there are
other Jains. You see, you will never loset whatever sanskar you have received in your
childhood (are in your blood as a result, ‘galthothi’).

R: That’s what I did when I came to Pittsburgh.

Ok aunty, thank you for your time and doing this interview with me.

End of transcript.

Participant Three: Vijay

Reena (R): Hello. How about if we start with some concrete information about yourself and that
way we can also do a sound check? We can start with you name, education, some information
about your occupation, things like that.

Vijay (V): Ok. My name is Suresh S. Originally, I am from Boru which is a small village
Manasa (Gujarat). Then we migrated…actually I was staying with my grandmother until 1961
and then in 61 I came to Bombay where my parents were living. My parents and my brothers and sisters were living in Bombay.

R: How old are you uncle?
V: I am 68.
R: What’s your education?
V: Education wise I had a degree Bachelor of Electrical Engineering from India and then I went to University of Pittsburgh for couple of semester to do my masters in Industrial Engineering, but I did not finish it because I got a job and then I was busy with job. Actually, two jobs at that time. I was working like 8 to 5 one place which was my regular job as an electrical engineer and then part time I was working from like 6 to 11 at another place, in a lab. Motion picture lab.

R: Wow, you had two jobs.
V: Actually, in the beginning I got only one part time job. I was working in a motion picture lab. Then I was going to school at the time and in May of 1970, actually I got a full time job as an engineer.

R: Have you always worked as an engineer? That has been your occupation?
V: Yes, as an electrical engineer.
R: And you are married…and right now retired?
V: Yes, I am married and right now I am retired, yeha. Last 10 years I worked for GE. Actually my company was bought by W.T. which is W.H. Company and then they sold part of that company to GE. So, I worked for GE for last 10 years.
R: So, how long you have been retired now?
V: Actually I have been retired for last four years. Because 2009 was my last job at GE.
R: How long you have been married?
V: I got married in 1970, so 42-43 years. This November is going to be 43 years.
R: Oh, ok.
V: Actually we got married in Pittsburgh area, in Pittsburgh.
R: I will come back to that later. Can you tell me who is in your immediate family?
V: I have my wife. I have two…one son and one daughter. My son was born in 1975 and my
daughter was born in 1977. My son is married and he has a child right now and they live in the
Baltimore area while my daughter lives in New York. She lives in New Jersey, but she works in
the New York city.

R: And both of them do for living?

V: Ok, my son is called physicist and he works for US government and right now he is taking
care of…I mean he works for the Defense Dept. and he takes care of some medicine for soldiers
and stuff like that.

R: And your daughter in New York?

V: My daughter in New York, she works for a graphic company and she is in sales.

R: Both your children are born and brought up here in the U.S.?

V: Yes.

V: And my mother is over here, my children’s grandmother and she is over here for almost like
20 years.

R: And she always stayed with you here?

V: Actually, I have another four brothers and three of them are in Pgh area and one lives in NY
area, in Long Islands and he is my eldest brother and he passed away actually last year. He has
two sons and they live in Long Island.

R: So, quite a bit of your other family is also in the US. Your other four brothers and nephews…

V: Actually, after I became citizen in like 1975…1976 actually, I became citizen and then I
called my two brothers from India, from Bombay. My two younger brothers. Then one brother
lived in Dubai and then I called him over here as well and they all came in 1977.

R: So, I am beginning to get a glimpse of your family. You started out by telling me that you first
lived with your grandmother in…

V: No, actually when my mom came in 1980, I think 81 or something, she stayed with me, you
know and then she was visiting my other brother. Right now she is staying with me, but then she
goes to my younger brother and…she spends little bit of time with everyone.

R: How about if we switch gears a little bit. How about if we go back a little bit and you tell me
about how did you find out about coming to the US? How did the idea even come to you…that
thought? What was going on in your life at that time?
V: Actually when I was in high school, particularly 11 and 12th grade in Bombay, my good friend, my best friend, actually. In those days we were studying together and stuff like that. Actually His brother was in USA at that time and he actually later on became my brother-in-law.

R: Oh, so your wife’s sister is married to your best friend’s brother?

V: That’s right. And then I was in engineering and he was with me, but in a different school and then he actually, after passing the BE exam, he came to the US.

R: So, your best friend finished his bachelors in engineering from Mumbai and he came here?

V: Yes, he came to the U.S.A. because of his brother. His brother called him to come over here.

R: And what part of the US was his brother at that time?

V: At that time he was living in Connecticut.

R: So, he called his brother who is your best friend. So, this idea about going to the US was around you and you knew people who had actually done that before?

V: Right because my best friend had done this before and he actually he sent me all the paperwork and stuff like that you know, India to me.

R: Oh, I see. Can you think back to that time and say a little bit about what kinds of things he told you about coming to the US and US?

V: Actually when I was in college at that time everybody knew about the US, that it is a rich country and jobs are plentiful and stuff like that and if you can work over here then you can make lot more money and stuff like that and that was my idea actually. Because my family was not very rich or anything like that. I was considered like middle class and my idea was to come over here and get a nice job and then just stay at the job. Actually my idea wasn’t to study in those days, you know. Actually the BE degree from India was recognized over here and you can get a green card, you know. So, I right after I came in September in 1969, I applied for green card (in) November-December.

R: And they were giving….  

V: They were giving approval right away.

R: Do you know what was prompting them to open…

V: Actually it was open and there was a scarcity of people and stuff like that in this country for educated people.

R: Oh, ok. That’s why that generation there are people who came for engineering, medicine?
V: Yes, particularly lot of engineers and lot of doctors came to this country in those time. Pharmacists and all this you know it became later on. Usually from India, in those days most of the engineers and doctors came.

R: When did you finish your bachelors in India?

V: Actually, I finished my BE in 1967 and then the friend of mine came here in 1968 and then I worked over there, in Mumbai and then in 1969 September I came over here.

R: And you already knew that there were plentiful jobs in engineering and he helped you out by sending you the paperwork?

V: Actually to get a visa you need some sort of a paper and actually in those days if you go to like a school, you get I-94 or something like that.

R: So, if you say that you are going to study…

V: Yeha.

R: Earlier you said that your idea was to come here and work and not to study in the beginning, but it was easier to get at least the initial visa…

V: Right, if you apply for green card right away then it takes a long time, you know.

R: So, I still want to stay with your time in Mumbai. At that time who was there in your immediate family?

V: My parents and my all my brothers and sisters.

R: From your immediate family was anyone here in the US?

V: No, I was the first one to come over here. Actually I came in 1969 and my other brothers came in 1977.

R: Almost eight years after you did.

V: Yes, because you have to become citizen and then you have to apply for them. Your blood relatives were allowed to come in those days (once you became a citizen). I mean, in those days it didn’t take a long time. Right now it takes about 8-10 years, but in those days it was real quick. And they came. I mean, they had a quota system and they had certain quota in the beginning…lot of people came over here like that.

R: How was it, once you…you said that even before your degree was done or anything like that, you had an idea…what word would you use? That you wanted to come to the US? Was it like a ‘plan’, ‘dream’ or…
V: It was like (pause) you can say like a dream of whatever, you know. I would call it a ‘dream.’ And the dream was to make decent money and stuff like that and take care of the family. That was the whole idea.

R: Are you the oldest? Oh, wait, you said you had an older brother…

V: Actually, I have two older brothers, two younger brothers and two younger sisters and I was the first one to get an engineering degree from India in my family because my eldest brother he did not go to college and then my another elder brother he was going to college in those days and he had a commerce degree and then he became lawyer and stuff like that. But I was the first one to get the engineering degree.

R: So, I am beginning to have a picture of…and you have to correct me if I am putting my idea into it but, you know, if you have a big family and come from a middle class family…it seems like you always had a feel that wherever there is an opportunity then I want to take advantage of that.

V: Right. Exactly.

R: What was the reasoning behind it? Why did you feel that way?

V: Because everybody knew that America is a pretty right country and you can see in those days…in India you were making 600 rupees in a month while you were making $600-700 a month over here. So, there was a big difference between what you can earn in India and what you could earn in this country.

R: So, one clear reason to decide to come to the US was financial advantage?

V: Yes, financial.

R: Were there other things that went into your decision?

V: Thinking back in those days education was a like a secondary thing. That was the second most important thing. First one was the job for me and second one was education and in education also this country was far superior than any other country.

R: So the two most important thing for you, the financial and education, you thought, both ways this country had a lot more to offer

V: Yes, a lot more to offer than any other country.

R: What about…did knowing that people you knew were already here help? How did that affect?

V: Only I knew my best friend, that’s it. I didn’t know anybody else in those days.
R: Being the first one in your family...financially it’s a big step to take..

V: Yes, it was.

R: How did you talk to your family about wanting to come here, being that it was a big step and for yourself as well how was it? How did you navigate that?

V: Actually they were worried you know that how I will leave in USA by myself, you know. Without family support and stuff like that.

R: So, what kinds of things they were worried about for you?

V: They were worried about me eating and stuff like that, you know. And (when I lived with my family), I did not have to worry about food and stuff like that, but when here I have to make my own food, I have to buy my own groceries and stuff like that.

R: Which is very different than how it happens in India...

V: Right.

R: Do you recall having those conversations with your family, your parents...

V: Actually we were just talking about how I will live in this country. Apart from that the discussion didn’t go in too much detail.

R: How did they feel about you leaving and going so far away from Mumbai?

V: They felt very bad, you know. They felt very sad and stuff like that but since I was coming over here for everybody’s benefit, they were happy that I was coming to the US.

R: So, you feel they were definitely worried about how would you survive on your own, did you feel supported?

V: Oh, they supported all the way, you know for me coming to USA and financially and stuff like that.

R: So, you got support from both your parents?

V: Yes, my family and my brothers as well.

R: You said you felt fine and (earlier when we were talking) you had a smile on your face when you said, “you can call it a dream if you want.”

V: It was a big thing for most of the people to go to USA in those days and even today lot of people they come to U.S.A., you know.
R: Can you help me understand that it was a big thing?

V: Actually, everybody’s dream was to go to USA and make lot of money and stuff like that and even in those days and same thing with me, you know. That way it was a big step for me as well as my family.

R: Were there anybody in your family who had been to other parts of the world? Since Gujarati community has a history of going to different parts of the world if there is business or education?

V: Actually…nobody from my family. Later on my youngest brother went to Dubai. That was much later on after I came to USA. I was the first one to leave home.

R: So, you were a path-breaker and risk-taker in many ways. Did you feel that way?

V: I did not feel that way, risk taker, but I thought I can do better to my family, you know.

R: What do you mean by that?

V: Financially I can take care of them because they were like a middle class family and by making, even if you save a little bit over here it’s a lot in India in those days. Even today, it’s a lot.

R: Sounds like there was not only wanting to realize your dream, but you felt a deep sense of responsibility to your…

V: Responsibility to my family, right.

R: And you felt that coming all the way to the US will help you meet that responsibility.

V: Right, exactly.

R: Your parents were sad and your family too. How did you feel when you started to get ready?

V: Actually I was excited to come to the U.S.A. (laughs slightly). A friend of mine, he gave me full support that he will take care of me and stuff like that. So, actually I was worry free and I was excited to come to this country.

R: So, it was exciting. You were coming to the U.S. for the first time. Did you have ideas about what USA was like?

V: I had no idea about U.S.A., you know. I had no idea. Actually, I had seen some pictures and stuff like that, in the movies but I had no idea that roads are this big, houses are this nice and stuff like that.

R: Did your friend gave you an idea and helped you prepare a little bit?
V: I mean he had a car and stuff like that, but apart from that I had no idea. He did not write to me about U.S.A.

R: Did you imagine about U.S.A. and how it would be?

V: Not really but I had pretty good idea about how big this country is and stuff like that, but I did not know how the roads or the houses or the cities look like.

R: So, you left from Mumbai. Where did you first came in the U.S.?

V: Actually I came to New York city, but before I came to the U.S.A. I had four days extra and I went to London, I went to France, Paris. I went to Geneva.

R: Oh, so you took a little detour?

V: Yes, a vacation and actually brother-in-law of a friend of mine came with me so actually there were two together.

R: Two of you were coming together to the U.S. and both of you decided to take a little break.

V: Right. Our ticket was such that I can take a little break in between. So, actually we came to the U.S.A. four days after we left India.

R: You say a little bit of Europe before you came to the US. What do you remember of those four days?

V: Actually, the four days I remember the most is actually we had more money when we landed in NY city than when we left Bombay.

R: (Both of us laugh) What you do mean?

V: Ok, let me explain. When we were in Paris we were staying in one courtyards. They were supposed to provide the food, the airlines and the hotel was supposed provide food. But they did not have a restaurant so they gave us money and from that…you know they gave us money for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and from that money we actually we went and we were vegetarian so we had little expenses and they were giving money for regular food and stuff and we had lot of money left. And there were two of us so we pulled together. So we hired a taxi and went to Paris and we saw all the sights.

R: And that’s how you had more money when you landed in New York. Ok. How does that stand out for you in your first visit to all these cities?

V: Actually, this is a story we tell everybody, but I have fond memories of Paris, Geneva particularly, and London because we saw those cities for the first time.
R: Staying still with Mumbai, how were those last few days before you left and then getting on the plane?

V: If I remember correctly, there was a lot of excitement of me coming to USA, you know. When I was packing my bag, naturally you are all excited, you gonna take this, you gonna take that and all my grandmother from village, she came to say goodbye to me. All my relatives came, stuff like that.

R: That’s what you recall, being excited and all your family coming to say goodbye.

V: And those days I was going with Mira, you know.

R: Oh, you mean you were dating aunty?

V: Yes, dating.

R: How long were you dating her?

V: Maybe two years or something like that.

R: Oh, ok. How did that go? How did both of you talk about coming to the US?

V: Actually, she was sister-in-law of my friend’s brother. I was studying with the friend of mine for engineering so I was going to his place at Worli. In those days they had a flat. So, I was studying over there and she was coming over there also because her sister was over here (here means US) and there was nobody in the family to take care of them, like making food and stuff like that.

R: Oh, so she had some family over here?

V: Yes, her sister was in US. Mira was taking care of my friend and his father in India

R: And that’s how you started to date?

V: Yes, that’s how I knew her and…

R: How did you talk to her about coming to the U.S.?

V: She was also excited that I was planning to come and her sister was here in those days so she wasn’t that worried about me coming to the U.S.A. She knew a little bit about what it is like here.

R: Oh, and actually leaving her and family?

V: Leaving her was (pause, some hesitancy) was a big thing in those days, but later on I told her that I will call you and we will get married and stuff like that.
R: There is something that I am thinking, you talked about feeling responsible and you were leaving a lot behind. It was not only your immediate family but your future responsibility too.

V: Right but actually I was planning for her to be called over here. So she was…in that way she was little bit not worried.

R: Sounds like it was difficult for both of you.

V: Yes, it was difficult.

R: Did you both have an idea how long it would be before she can actually come?

V: No, no. In those days I had no idea but when she was writing to me that she wanted to come over here right away and stuff like that.

R: So, you communicated using letters?

V: In those days, you know. There were no e-mail; even phone calls were very expensive. It cost like $6-7 a minute to make a phone call and 6-7 was a lot of money when you were making $600 a month.

R: I see. So, you communicated through letters.

V: Yes, Everybody communicated that way. Even to get a phone in Bombay was very difficult. Right now if you apply in the morning and you get the phone in the afternoon, but in those days years and years to get a job.

R: Oh, I remember growing up we never had a phone in the house. Did you feel you were leaving home? How did you feel when you left Mumbai and India behind?

V: Actually I was excited to come to the U.S.A. in those days. So, I did not worry too much about my family or her and stuff like that and because I knew that I will go to the USA, I will get a job, I will send them money and later on I will call her to come over here. So…

R: You knew that was the plan and you were going to do it. How did you feel about leaving behind India?

V: Actually, I was not too much in love with Bombay in those days. I came in 1961 to Bombay so I had no connection with the city, not that much. I mean lot of people are born and raised in the city, in Bombay and they really love the city. But in my case, up to 10th grade I was staying with my grandmother in a small village. So that was my home. Bombay wasn’t my home even though I did engineering from there and I work over there for four years. But I wasn’t too much connected with the city.
R: Uncle sounds like you were familiar, in some ways, with the idea of leaving home. Because you left where you felt like home in the village with your grandmother and came to the city to your family, education, and job. In some way you had experience with leaving and going somewhere else.

V: I think you can say that. I was also a small kids in those days and 10th grade you know is 16-17 yrs old. So I was thinking too much about leaving Devda where I was living with my grandmother. I came to live with my family. So, I was going to my family, I was going to my siblings.

R: Anything else that stands out for you of that period before you left India?

V: No, I mean you are a little bit care free because you are in high school and college. You meet your friends every day and you study with them.

R: So, you are now in New York City with another friend who is travelling with you. What do you remember when you we in New York?

V: Actually when we were in New York we came in the afternoon or the evening like that so we did not see the city that much actually and a friend of mine who was living in Pittsburghin those days. He and another friend came in the car to receive us in New York city and then right away we left for Pittsburgh at night time.

R: Oh, so you had applied to Univ. of Pittsburgh?

V: Yeha, yeha. That’s how they give the visa.

R: You had that friend in Pittsburgh and so you chose to apply to University. of Pittsburgh?

V: Right, University of Pittsburgh, yes.

R: You drive to come to Pittsburgh and what about the other friend who came with you?

V: Yes, he also came with me to Pittsburgh.

R: And you started your masters in industrial engineering?

V: Yes.

R: Tell me about those first few days.

V: I came to U.S.A. in September so that was a long time back. It will be almost 43-44 years back. It was beginning of fall so all the trees were….most of the leaves were gone and stuff like that.
R: When you drove from New York how was the car journey as this was now your introduction to Pittsburgh?

V: I remember about eating French fries in some restaurant. I just remember that.

R: Oh, that is very American right?

V: Yes, that was for us, vegetarians. I think French fries and grilled cheese sandwich was something like that, you know that was our dinner. I just remember. My first meal in the U.S. We stopped somewhere in the rest area and…

R: Where did you stay when you first arrived in Pgh?

V: I stayed with my friend in the beginning and he had two bedroom apartment because he was working on this days. He had finished school and he had a job and he was working and another friend who was living with him was working for the Pittsburgh Department of Transportation. So there were these two friends in in two bedroom. And then in one bedroom where my friend was living, he had his bed. Actually me and my friend who came with me from India were living.

R: So, now there were three of you living in one bedroom?

V: Right. Four of us in two bedroom apartment.

R: How was it to make that transition, those first few months?

V: School started in September. Actually, if you live in Bombay, you live in one room apartment or something like that. So, considering that you know this was a big thing, you know. You had a separate kitchen, you had a living room, your bedroom, your bathroom. So, this was a big thing, actually.

R: Oh, so it was already something different.

V: It was better. Like in India, if you live in Chali system, you have to share bathroom, which is common for everybody while here you have your own bathroom and your own shower and stuff like that. SO, it was big thing, you know. And you were happy that you were living in a your own place.

R: Even right away, looks like, you were beginning to see the difference?

V: Yes, see the difference and then you went to the grocery store and you see a lot of grocery and stuff like that and everything is filled up and there is no scarcity of anything. While in those days in Bombay you have to stand in a ration line and stuff like that and you have to get the rationing. So, that way it was a big, big change.
R: Right away you notice that the space is different, there is more available to you.

V: If you look at Bombay and if you look at Pgh, particularly Oakland area, you know it looks quite a bit different.

R: You go to the grocery store and see the abundance.

V: Abundance of everything and there is no scarcity of anything.

R: How did that feel?

V: I mean this was a big change from what you see in Bombay and what I saw in actual Pgh in those days. Because if you go to the grocery store and everything is available and the prices in those days, in my opinion were very, very low compared to Bombay.

R: It was not only that it was abundant, but it could be available to you, you could afford it.

V: Yes, it was a lot cheaper.

R: I would imagine…even when I came I lived on campus and had an apartment for myself and it was very strange because I lived in very small place, so I didn’t quite really know how to use it. It took time to get used to. I wonder if you felt that way?

V: I did not live in a dormitory and was in an apartment, but I mean you can see the change between Bombay and Pittsburgh. And mainly I felt like a this is real nice thing to happen to you.

R: Can you say a little bit more about that.

V: Actually in Bombay everything is crowded and a lot of people and scarcity of lot of different things while here it was altogether different. Plenty of things available to you, lot cheaper, lot less people and lot of cars and buses and stuff like that. While in those days it was difficult in Bombay.

R: This was your first impression of Pittsburgh?

V: Right.

R: What did you think about the city and the country initially in the first few days and months?

V: Actually we traveled from NY city to Pgh at night time so I did not see much of the country and since my friend was working we did not go to Pgh downtown or anything like that but I saw Oakland area and actually I was walking from my apartment to the school and then from school to this place where I was working you know. By September 30th I had a job.

R: Oh, so you come to the US in the first week of September and within weeks you find the job?
V: Yes.

R: This is your part-time job?

V: Actually they wanted me full-time but I cannot work legally full time because I was on student visa.

R: Tell me little bit about how you found out about this job?

V: Actually, most of my friends, they were working in McDonalds or Dairy Queen or something like that and they were making, in those days, I still remember, $1.65 which was the minimum wage per hour. And actually, I was looking...since we...I didn’t have a lot of money with me, I have to pay tuition and stuff like that even though my friend was willing to lend me money I have to pay him back later on. So, I was looking for a job, part-time kind of job and I started looking in Oakland because I lived there and my school was right over there. So, luckily I came across this motion picture lab. They were making chemicals and stuff like that. So I went over there and I asked them if you have a job and stuff like that. I fill out the application and the boss took interview and he hired me and he said, “can you work full-time?” and I couldn’t work full time, so I said, “I can work maybe 4-5 hours per day.”

R: So you just started looking for a job…

V: Actually the very first place I went for job, I got the job and it was right in Oakland, right on my way to the apartment and the college, you know.

R: Oh, ok. So how did you feel when you…

V: Oh, I was excited about that job and it was lab job while McDonalds you have to make hamburgers and (work with) meat whereas here it was clean job. This was motion picture lab, you know they were processing the film. So, downstairs they were processing the film and upstairs you have to make different chemicals to process this film. So, there was a big drum and there was a rotator. You fill the drum with some dry chemicals and then you mix it. Then you check the ph and stuff like that and make sure that it is right and you have to send that mixture to the storage tank and from the storage tank they were taking it downstairs. So, I got this job and I have to make this chemical and then take the ph in the lab and if it’s ok then you complete. That was the job.

R: Did you like working there?

V: Oh, I loved working over there plus I actually everybody was making $1.65 as I said, I was making $3.35. More than double, you know. So, I was really happy about that. I wrote my parents, you know that I got a job and they don’t have to worry about sending me the money for expenses or anything. So, right away I started supporting me and my college and everything.
R: Right. So you were on your own right away?

V: Right away.

R: Ok. You know the word that come to my mind is kind of that ‘initiative.’ You came here with lot of support from a lot of people, your family but once you got here, you right away…

V: I got a job.

R: The go-getter, that word comes to my mind. What about missing home during that early period?

V: Oh, I was missing home very much, you know and I…when I wrote my letter to my parents I always wrote how (I was) missing them and missing Bombay.

R: What did you miss?

V: You know family and stuff like that because there were nine in our family in those days: my parents and seven brothers and sisters. So, I missed them. I was used to having all my family around and sleeping together and eating together and stuff like that. While over here you are by yourself actually. Basically your friend is with you but still here you are yourself.

R: How was it adjusting to that change?

V: I adjusted pretty well, you know. I had a routine. Over the weekend I was doing my laundry, I was making my own food and…that kept me busy and helped with missing my family.

R: How was that transition for you, doing your own cooking, laundry and all that?

V: Actually, a friend of mine showed me how to make grilled cheese sandwich and stuff like that (laughs) or buys French fries from the store or pizza from the store and make pizza and stuff like that.

R: Oh, your friends who had been here longer showed you the ropes?

V: Right.

R: And how did you…did you like doing all that or…

V: You were excited to be in this country so all this did not come into picture and actually you came to USA for that purpose, you know.

R: You are saying that the priority is to be here and make a living, first is responsibility…

V: Yes. So missing family, missing how you make the food and like that…that was secondary.
R: What about availability of Indian grocery?

V: In those days there was no grocery store. Actually, after I came over here one guy started the grocery in Oakland area and he was the first one to have the Indian grocery store in whole Pgh.

R: When you came there was no grocery store?

V: No grocery store, there was no section of, like foreign groceries and stuff like that in regular grocery store.

R: How did you cope with that?

V: Actually, you cope with making grilled cheese sandwich, mixing fruit cocktail in milk and buying like pizza shells from the store.

R: So, you adapted to whatever was available.

V: Yes, yes. Because in those days we were strictly vegetarian plus you have to make everything yourself. Because the friend of mine was working and he was eating outside. Other friend actually he was doing the same thing. So you are left (by yourself, laughs).

R: So, you make do with whatever you can. Did you miss the food?

V: Yes, you miss the food, the Indian kind of vegetarian food, but whatever available over here you were eating that.

R: And like you said you were here for different purpose.

V: Actually, you had chosen this place to, I mean, to come over here, right? So, you made a choice and there was no need of complaining. Even though you miss it, but…

R: Oh, I see. Now, how was it for you at school? Were there other Indian students in your program?

V: There were a lot of other students. Lot of…then I became friends with some other Indian students and stuff like that and they were helping me and I was helping them.

R: Earlier you had said that you were in the program for 2-3 semesters?

V: Yes, two semesters.

R: Tell me more about that.

V: I was, I mean, it was easy in the sense what you are used to in India of studying and over here, you know studying is all together is different. Over here is depends on what you do today rather than what you do at the last for a big final exam. In those days in India it was like that.
R: How adjusting to that new system.

V: Compared to India if you study properly it was easy. First of all you take care of whatever is your study, whatever is the homework or whatever is required to do it. And then that’s it. Particularly there was a lot of time here when you have to do the computer work and in computer you have to punch cards and all that those days and then you have to have time at the university and stuff like that and you generate the report.

R: So, you got to meet other Indian community people as well?

V: There were some students and I was friends with lot of students.

R: Were there other Indian families here that you got to know and community?

V: Actually there was a friend of mine who live with this friend who was in Pgh and he was married. He got married over here. So, we used to go to his place once in a while for dinner and stuff like that and it was like a big thing for us because big meal and Indian meal.

R: I see. There must be other American students in your class as well.

V: Oh, yeha they have a lot of American students. But you may not (be) close friends with them, you know.

R: Why not?

V: Because usually you speak Indian language and you are more inclined to be friends with Indians rather than Americans or foreigners.

R: Did you think of them as foreigners?

V: In those days I didn’t do, you know he is foreigner or something like that. I know the difference between Indian and white skin and something like that.

R: What do you mean? Can you help me understand that more?

V: Actually, Indian, you can recognize Indian by the color of the skin, you know. Brown and stuff like that. While with Americans they are white.

R: Did you consider making friends with, outside of class with them?

V: In those days you were not too much worried about making lot of friends and stuff like that. Your main aim was to study or get a job, something like that. And you cannot entertain your friends because you are living with somebody, you didn’t know how to cook. Maybe we did not even consider making friends with Americans. We did talk with them for studying and when the teacher was teaching and if it was needed.
R: How did they, do you think, react to having Indian classmates?

V: I have no problem with them or they didn’t have any problem with us. Actually, it was pretty harmonious relationship. Everybody got along. They were not talking about “you are Indian or you are from India” or something like that.

R: What about at work?

V: At work, actually lot of people say there is a lot of discrimination and stuff like that, but I did not find that kind of…actually my boss was like my best friend or my mentor and he really liked me and when I was talking about India, taking care of my family and my teacher and he was really impressed and he…he was really nice to me and the very first day, I am talking about my full-time job here…

R: Oh, this is not the part-time job?

V: No. This is my boss at my full-time job. I worked at my part-time job in the evenings after my school and my full-time job.

R: When did you find the full-time job?

V: I found full-time job 1970, May.

R: This was just a year into your program, did you finish your degree?

V: No, no. I got a job and I decided to quit my program. So, I did not get my masters.

R: How did that opportunity come?

V: I was looking for a full time job from the very beginning and actually in November I applied for my green card so I was allowed to find job or something. Actually, if I quit my engineering, I mean school, I can do it, you know. I applied for green card and it was approved.

R: So, you applied in November and it was approved pretty quickly.

V: Yes, in January or something like that.

R: So, now you are…you come in September and by January of next year you have your green card. So, you are really looking for…

V: I did not have my green care but it was approved and then I got married so she had to apply for green card so it took a little bit of time.

R: And at that time you were working for the lab and now you started to look for a full time job?

V: Yes, a full-time job.
R: She has come…when did she come?

V: She came in October of 1970 and we got married in November 1970.

R: Where did you get married?

V: In Pittsburgh. It is a big deal. Actually a friend of mine, the friend whose place I went for dinner he got married in Pittsburgh, also, so there was some….actually some precedent.

R: So, you felt that it can be done?

V: Yes and we called the priest from NY city and he was working at consulate, NY consulate. That was his full time job, but on the side he was a priest. I paid for his air fare and everything.

R: So, aunty came here…

V: She came to her sister first as a visitor. We decided to have the ceremony here in Pittsburgh and her sister came over here. Actually that time they were changing job and moving to SC and they stopped in Pittsburgh for a weekend.

R: How was it getting married here without your families?

V: That was kind of sad you know. But again you are excited to get married so you don’t think too much about being sad (we both laugh).

R: How about if we take stock of your journey so far? You said that there were two important things: financial responsibility and education and looks like now it’s beginning to…you are already making your way into financial independence. You are also married. So, how did you find a job and starting a family here?

V: I was applying to a lot of different companies in those days. In those days I think things got a little bit sour over here also.

R: In what way?

V: Job market wise. So, a lot of companies were not hiring in Pittsburgh area and in those days US Steel and Westin House, they were the prime employer in Pittsburgh area. I applied to them, I applied to a lot of different companies outside and everybody replied, “No, no, no.” Finally, I made a phone call. I was looking at Yellow Pages and if I see something electrical, I was calling them. So, I came across motor coils meaning, since it was coils, I call them. The lady answered it and she said, “why don’t you come down here for an interview and then we will see.” So, next day I took a bus in Braddock and went to this lady who was taking care of the HR. So, I talk to her and she arranged for an interview for me with the chief engineer and vice president and finally they hired me. They offered me the job right away and actually they asked me about the
salary and in those days I had a friend who had master’s degree and he was making $650/month so I asked and I had bachelor’s degree. I did not finish my master’s degree. So, I asked for $650 and they gave me $700. So, I was like on top of the world in those days. I got a job and I got a nice salary and everything. And they wanted me to start very next day. Right away.

R: Did you feel that whatever you expected and whatever you set for yourself…

V: My goal was achieved.

R: How about if we take a break and then resume?

V: Ok.

R: Uncle, I am beginning to get an idea of your early life here in the US. I think so, little bit. Anything that stands out for as you think back during that first decade or so in the US?

V: I think the first ten years the main thing, I did not have a car so I had to walk to the bus stop and take a bus to go to the job. That was the main thing, you know about the car. Second thing was no Indian grocery store and very few grocery store itself. Third thing was no Indian restaurant. So in those days it was very very difficult for us to, you know live actually.

R: What was particularly difficult for you?

V: Particularly food was difficult and we had to get all the groceries or masalas and stuff like that from India either they have to send the parcel or when we go to India we have to bring a lot of stuff with us. So that was the main thing.

R: And how was it once you got married, to adjust to that for both of you?

V: Actually the way…1969-70 there was really bad snow storm and still I had to walk from my end of McKee, I don’t know if you know Oakland area or not, McKee place to main fifth avenue. I had to walk everyday over there in the snow and sleek and stuff like that and then I had to take a bus to go to my job and in the evening I had to come back by bus and go to another job and there was also walking.

R: So, you had to walk everywhere, getting used to walking in snow. How did you get used to cold and snow?

V: (Laughs) When you live in this country you have to get used to whatever comes.

R: Oh, so it is the same idea that you have made a choice to be here…

V: So you have to bear whatever comes your way.

R: When did you think about calling your other brothers here and how did that come about?
V: Actually, they wanted to come over here for a long time but since I was not citizen and after being a citizen you have stay five years and then you can call. So, they had to wait. I mean, they wanted to come earlier but I cannot call them.

R: Because there were all these rules about that?

V: Right.

R: So, did they come for just like you for studies and job?

V: Actually they came for jobs. Because my one younger brother did not go to college so he wanted to work over here. My other brother who was older to me, he went to college but he had a commerce degree and it was not much of use in this country, you know. But still he wanted to come over here and get a job.

R: How did you decide to call them here?

V: Both of them came together and the way they came over here, my daughter was born on the same day. She (my wife) was in hospital and they came over here. They came to Pittsburgh because I was living in Pittsburgh.

R: And did you help them settle here, find jobs?

V: Yes. I was talking to my boss, you know in those days and my boss gave job to my one brother. Another brother actually he was going to be in a union because he was going to work in a shop and at that time we had layoff in a shop so I cannot hire him. So, I got him a job at somebody else and he was working over there. And when there was opening in my company, he got job in the company.

R: So, over time both of them started to work in the same company as yours.

V: Yes and then in the morning I was taking them to the work.

R: So, you were doing what your friend helped you to do for your brothers?

V: Yes, they were staying with me and stuff like that and then they started to live in an apartment and called their families over here.

R: Within 10-11 years of you being here, you had some of your family here and when were your son and daughter born?

V: My son was born in 1975. So when they came he was 2 years old. My daughter was born the day they came. She was born in 1977.
R: Maybe I can ask you a more general question about family life. How is it building a family here? How is that experience for you?

V: Actually, in India, as you know big families is really a plus (an advantage) for small kids and you know when they get raised…you actually don’t know how they get raised, you know.

R: Because you have other family members helping to take care of them?

V: Yes, exactly. Over here you have to do everything yourself and Mira was really taking care of both of them. Because I was working. I had to go out of town and work a lot of overtime and stuff like that and she was taking care of them. And it was very hard on her.

R: Did she work outside of the home?

V: In the beginning she worked, but when my son was born, she quit the job.

R: She was raising the children and you were working hard. Now both of them are adults and have grown up here, how is raising family here?

V: I don’t know how they got raised, you know (both of us laugh). She was taking care of them, you know. She was really hard working in those days.

R: Sometimes, you know they are born and brought up here whereas you came here as a young man, born and raised in India. Do you think there are differences, challenges to that?

V: I think there are a lot of differences between the way we got brought up and the way they got brought up over here and since they are out kids they understand the family values and stuff like that. I mean, still they are attached to the family. Like a lot of kids are not attached to the family. Luckily they have been brought up in such a way that they talk to my mother, their grandmother and stuff like that. Whenever they call they ask for her, how she is feeling. Apart from that, my son has their own daughter now and the way he raises her and the way we raise them is a lot of different thing.

R: For example?

V: I mean, they are really very careful. She has to sleep at certain time, she has to wake up at certain time and stuff like that. When they were growing up we did not follow that very strictly.

R: So, parenting styles are different?

V: Yes, parenting styles are altogether different than with us.

R: Uncle for you and aunty were there challenges raising your kids here? Because these differences…culture is different, language is different.
V: Challenges wise I don’t think there were a lot of challenges because we raised them the way we raise any kinds, you know.

R: Ok. What were some of the things that were important for you when it came to raising your children?

V: I mean, they are well disciplined. They would listen to their parents and stuff like that. That was the main thing. And we tried to speak our language, Gujarati. I mean, my kids can speak little bit, but they can communicate with my mother. So, in that respect the language was main thing also.

R: It was important for you and aunty that they know and understand Gujarati.

V: Yeha, at least understand (Gujarati). My daughter, you know used to read it. Read Gujarati, but now she doesn’t as there is no practice.

R: So, why were those things important for both of you?

V: Because being Indian and Gujaratis you have to know your language plus they are able to communicate with other family members.

R: Language is important for passing on the culture also and families ties…

V: Mainly family ties.

R: What about having children in school. Were there other Indian children with them or were they the only ones and how did that work?

V: Maybe they had one Indian child, for them there were not many Indian children because we lived in this area for long time and there were very few Gujarati or Indian families living in this area.

R: What kind of impact did that have on your children?

V: I don’t think they had any kind of impact whether there were other Indian children or not. They had lot of other friends and they always played with them and got brought up.

R: Did they have challenges because they were Indian, in school or in their friendships?

V: I don’t think they felt anything different than…that they are Indian or something like that.

R: How do you think the transition has been for your children now being adults and having their own families?
V: I don’t think they felt anything different in my opinion. Those thoughts did not occur to them that culturally they are different than Americans and stuff like that, you know. Naturally, they have all American friends and they just got along with them pretty well and they got raised that way.

R: Do you think they see themselves as Indians, Americans, Indian-American?

V: I mean they look like Indians so they say, ‘Indian’ but behavior wise and stuff like that they are pretty close to being American, you know.

R: Tell me more about that.

V: Actually, my son, particularly I am talking about my son, you know and my daughter also. (Pause) He is American. I mean, he eats a lot of American food and stuff like that, but he is still vegetarian. So, culturally he is very close to India or Indians, I think one priest came to the temple and was talking about vegetarianism and he became completely vegetarian and he even doesn’t drink milk nowadays. He is like… a vegan. My daughter is vegetarian, she doesn’t eat meat or anything like that. When they were growing up they were non vegetarians. My daughter had to have McDonalds 2-3/week or something like that, but now doesn’t even care you know. So, they are pretty close to India or being vegetarian but their behavior or the way they think or whatever you know is pretty close to people over here.

R: Which is like what?

V: Mainly the parenting right now but the way they live, the way they friends and stuff like that. They are all American style.

R: And how do you feel about that?

V: Sometime you feel “It’s ok.” Sometime you feel, “they should be more like us” Like we really take care of the friends or relatives stuff like that. While theirs is little bit different.

R: Sometimes you feel…

V: Particularly friends and stuff like that. Whatever friends they have, that’s fine but taking care of the friends and those relationships. Socially more involved with them. Parties and things like that.

R: How is your relationship with your children?

V: Oh, it’s fine. My daughter calls every single day from her job or on her way to home. My son calls 3-4 times a week and my granddaughter is on phone with her or with me. We are going to birthdays and in a year 3-4 times he comes over here and we go over there, visit them. So, you know, we have a nice relationship with both our kids.
R: Do you think because of cultural difference…how do you bridge the difference, if there is, between you and your children? In what way does it come up?

V: Sometime she (his wife) tells them that “you should take care of friends” or maybe “you should get more involved” and sometimes we don’t say anything.

R: What about language? You now have 3rd generation.

V: We feel that if they know out language, it is better, you know but if they don’t learn or if they are not accustomed to that this kind of, then it’s ok.

R: Do you mostly speak in Gujarati at home?

V: Yes, we mostly speak Gujarati at home.

R: How has it been for you as far as Gujarati is concerned, your relationship with the language?

V: Most of my…I have some American friends, but most of my other friends, most of them are Gujararatis. So Gujarati is not a problem. I speak with them in Gujarati. I mean a lot of the time you speak English, but most of the time you speak Gujarati.

R: Do you miss anything about the way Gujarati is spoken in India? Sometime you feel at home in your language, have you worried that you might lose your language?

V: No, I don’t think I have felt anyway that way but I do talk to them in Gujarati or (pause) mainly in Gujarati (with my friends). My kids, you know, I have to speak in Gujarati sometime or most of the time I have to speak in English because they don’t understand.

R: How do you feel about that?

V: It’s ok because you live in this country and people speak English and stuff like that and they have to interact with lot of speaking in that language. So Gujarati doesn’t come into…it’s not that useful.

R: Uncle, you have lived here for such a long time and have made your home here and you have raised your family here. So, how would you describe living here in the U.S.?

V: Actually living over here is lot better than living in Bombay or in India. First of all I don’t like India’s political system. Each and every person is corrupt. Corruption over here, you know, there is a little bit corruption but not much and most of the corruption comes at the election time or for the election purpose. You cannot use the money somebody gives to you, just for your own purpose. You have to use it for election purpose, something like that. So, mainly I don’t like India’s political system Each and every politician is corrupt and the people are also corrupt. So,
that’s one thing. Second thing is over here there is a value to the human being. In India, it looks like there is no value to the human being.

R: What do you mean, can you help me understand that?

V: There are so many people and when people die or something the government or the politician there they don’t care while over here each and every life is counted.

R: Why is that important to you and impacted you?

V: It is important to everybody because when it comes to you, your family member, or your own family, it comes in picture.

R: Someone said, “there is lot of humanity here.”

V: Yeha, I mean a lot of rich people they give lot of donations and stuff like that. While in India there is no humanity. Like this incident happened in New Delhi. They were on a road, lying on a road just for half hour (or) an hour. People came over there and they saw them and left because they were afraid to get involved or something like that. Or they tried to help them or nothing. At least if they didn’t want to get involved with police or stuff, at least they can call 911 for Police or Ambulance, or somebody but they did not do anything.

R: This is what you mean when you say, “there is no value to human being?”

V: Right.

R: How has it been personally for you, looking back, you had an idea and a dream. In the light of that how do you think this country has been to you? What is your relationship to this country?

V: This country has been pretty nice to me actually and it’s nice to most of the Indians because you know they have done pretty well and lot of people have become very rich. The life over here is lot better than living in India because there is no scarcity of anything and stuff like that. You can get whatever you want if you have money. It’s…people you know they care about environment. In India, they don’t care about that much. So, life over here is lot better than living in India.

R: Do you think that all your expectations have been met?

V: (pause) As far as I am concerned, you know, Yes!

R: Like you said this country has been nice to you…

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22 He is referring here to the incident of gang rape of a young woman on a bus in New Delhi right around the time of the interview that caused a massive uproar in India and protest.
V: Nice to me and the way I am living over here, you know. I don’t think I ever want to go back to India.

R: Has that thought crossed your mind over all these years, thought of going back?

V: No. Actually, I wanted to live over here and I am living over here and I never had a thought that I will go back to India and just live over there because the things are so expensive (India) and stuff like that and people even don’t think about living over there. A house like this, you know, (points to his living room where we were sitting meaning his entire house in general) over there will cost a lot of money and you cannot have a house like that in a big city like Bombay.

R: So going back is not something you have wished for, hoped for…

V: Right.

R: Do you visit India periodically?

V: Actually when I was working, almost every year I went back to India. I like to visit them. I like to visit my relatives. I like to go to different restaurants and stuff like that. Bombay is nice in the sense that it’s a good system but lot of people and a lot of dirtiness.

R: What is your relationship with India and how do you think that has changed over the last 40 years you have lived here?

V: (pause) My opinion…If they don’t take care of the population problem in India, we are going to have lot of troubles. First of all, I mean there is three or four times more population over there than this country. Even this country has 8% unemployment. Can you imagine over there? And this country is well advanced kind of country. Lot of manufacturing jobs, all different kinds of jobs, you know. Lot of high tech and technology and stuff like that. While in India, they say “young generation is plus for them” but still you now they have to get a job from this country or other countries. There is a lot of outsourcing companies and stuff like that. So, first of all population is a big thing. If you go to Bombay people, people, people. Sometime you don’t like to like when I went in 1972 when my father expired and my sister got married, I went back to India. Actually, for a week or 10 days I did not go out of the house because there were so many people and I lived in this country for 2-3 years. Still, I got frightened with the way the people were coming. And if you are in Bhuleshwar (a very busy and crowded area in South Bombay), forget it.

R: How about your more recent visits to India and going back?

V: I mean there is a lot of progress in India, I mean don’t get me wrong, you know. A lot of progress, a lot of high-rise building and stuff like that, but still there is a lot of food people (hawkers) etc.
R: If I were to ask you where is your home, what would you say?

V: My home is Pittsburgh or this (points to his house).

R: What makes it home?

V: (pause) Home, I mean you feel at home here that is the main thing. This is your house. This is your community and stuff like that. While I am in Bombay, I am at her sister’s place or somebody’s place and I don’t, I mean they are nice people. They really take care of you and they behave like you are million bucks or something like that but still you feel good when you come back.

R: Oh, ok. I think that’s very interesting for me as you just said, “coming back” is here, not India.

V: No, not that. First of all my mother has a place in Kandivali (a suburb of Bombay). That’s where I call ‘our place’ you know. But that’s about it, you know.

R: Oh, so there is an apartment there, but home is here?

V: Home is here.

R: Coming back to home is coming back to Pittsburgh, to U.S.?

V: Right, exactly.

R: And feeling at home is also here?

V: Right, feeling at home is over here.

R: Why do you think that is?

V: I mean this is where you live and this is where you spend most of your time, I mean 42-43 years, you know. Actually, that’s longer than staying in India and in India also I moved from my parents’ place to my grandmother’s place and back again and stuff like that. In 23-24 years of living there.

R: So, this is the longest you have lived without moving anywhere…

V: Right. All 42 years I lived in Pittsburgh area.

R: If you were to describe yourself to someone, how would you describe yourself? You are Indian, Gujarati, American, Jain, all of it or none of it?

V: (laughs) I mean, I wouldn’t say myself American, you know. First of all I say that Indian, Gujarati or Jain or something like that, you know. But first of all I am an Indian, that I came
from India. I would not describe myself as American of something even though I have lived lot longer in this country. I voted for each and every president in election and stuff like that since 1976. I am citizen, but still I am not 100% American because I was not born and raised over here.

R: Ok, so you are Indian, Gujarati, and you are a Jain. Will you say you are American at all? Only citizen wise you are.

V: Right. I mean, legally I am American…Since you are a American citizen, you have to say you are American or something like that, but still I am not born or raised over here. I have not participated in the way most of the American have participated in the draft and Army. Most of the American, you know, they have served…

R: During different wars, you mean?

V: Yes. I you talk to any elderly people like myself, they have participated in some sort of war.

R: Does that also have something to do with your skin color?

V: No, I think actually lot of people were not applying for green card in 1969-1970 because they were afraid they will be drafted because in those days there was a draft. Because we were that age, 26-27, 25 yrs old and according to birthday, you can be called. So, people were afraid and lot of people did not apply for green card and they have to go back to India.

R: Why did you apply?

V: I was not worried about that and my main aim was to call my brothers and call my family members and the only way, I can do that is by becoming citizen.

R: So, sounds like you again kind of had a choice which was between responsibility to family or go back?

V: Right and I was not worried about draft actually.

R: You feel that you have lived her for all these years but your participation in this country is different, the role of your generation?

V: In our generation, actually, most of the people, I am not talking about some other people, but most of the people, their aim was to get a decent job, nicer job and make a lot of money and take care of their families. That was the main thing rather than participate in the political system and stuff like that. Now, I think they have started doing those things. Couple of people are governors of different states. Lot of…some people are in Congress, some people are in state senate and stuff like that. Like when we came, our first generation, they were not interested in the political system at all. Because their goal was different. Now, they live in this country, our kids and stuff
like that and they are going to be the citizen of this, I mean, this…this is the world they have known. This is their home.

R: Here is something which is interesting. When you were talking about feeling at home or being at home it’s here Pittsburgh, U.S. When I asked you who you are, it is Indian, I am Gujarati, I am Jain. What do you think about that ‘-‘ in between Indian-American or American-Indian? Does that term describe you? Or could it?

V: I mean, you can say, American-Indian or Indian-American or something like that but all our kids and stuff like that are…our next generation, they gonna be called Indian-American or whatever.

R: You are not…

V: Yeha, I am still probably Indian you know and they will be called Indian-American because they are born to Indians.

R: You think that it (Indian-American) term is more describes more of your children’s generation that yours.

V: Right, being born and brought up here.

R: Now, I think I generally have all my questions as well. You have been very generous to me and have been talking to me for a while. Are there things that were important or have come up for you as we have talked that you would like to talk about but we haven’t had a chance yet?

V: I think we got most of the things of my life, but I just wanted to tell you that lot of people feel like discriminated and stuff like that. I never felt, in my job, that way. People respected me, particularly my boss liked me and everybody respected me at my job. So, contrary to lot of other people’s feelings that they have been discriminated, I don’t feel like discriminated. And I like to work for small company rather than big companies. Because I worked in a small company for more than 30 years and last 10 years, I worked for GE which was a big company. So, I can see the big company’s culture and small company’s culture and it’s altogether different. You can learn a lot more in a small company than in a big company. And big companies, I think, from my experience, the managers or the people at the top they don’t have much to offer rather than…because of education or they know somebody they get that kind of position. While in a small company, actually you have to show that you can work or you have the knowledge.

R: Ok. I understand that in all these years of living and working here you have not felt discrimination. Sounds like you have heard that other people have…
V: I have, a lot of people they say that they have been discriminated (for) promotion, jobs and stuff like that and I don’t feel like that. I had vice president of operations job. I had vice president of engineering job. So, I had lot of different kinds of job.

R: What is the basis discrimination when Indians do experience it?

V: I think it is because of the skin color. Right now, I think, the Republicans are discriminating against the President because he is Black and they don’t like him.

R: Because he is Black?

V: Because he is Black and they don’t like him.

R: And it is similar kind of discrimination because of skin color?

V: Yes, skin color, particularly in job and promotion.

R: How has been your experience of living with other communities in the US? This is a very diverse country.

V: Actually, I am not too much involved with those kind of people but all my friends they are all from India. Similarly, they have their own group. They have their Chinese group or Spanish group or something like that.

R: How has this country changed in the last 40 years that you have lived here?

V: (Long pause) I don’t think this country has changed anyway in that respect much. I think still there are lot of groups and stuff like that.

R: That’s pretty much what I wanted to talk about and you have been more than generous with your story and your journey. It is a privilege for me to witness it. What would you say to generations like us, more recent generation who come over here what would you tell them about coming to this country and living here?

V: Actually most of the people coming to this country now a days are really well off in India right now, most of them. Most of them are well off and they don’t have life like we had. We had to take care of the family and stuff like that and our main aim was to take care of the family. While you guys don’t have that kind of responsibilities.

R: How does that impact coming here, you think?

V: So, you know they can live American way or something like that. They don’t have to live the way we have lived in India. You know when we were living in one room, we were 8 or 10 people. While you got big apartment or house for one person. You know we had a real hard time
finding food and stuff like that, you don’t have that problem. You have Patel Brothers. You can
go there and get anything you want. And better stuff.

R: It’s easier for us?

V: A lot easier.

(His wife shares at this point, “Now you have internet, phone everything and you can stay in
touch easily.”)

V: I mean, technology wise it’s easy now. We could not even use phone in those days because
phone was too expensive. Right now, you know for $10 you can call whole month.

R: So, that offers us more opportunity to be more like Americans also and continue to be Indians
also because we have always in touch with them.

V: Exactly, right.

R: So, Thank you very much uncle. You have given me so much of your time and I will
hopefully do justice to your story and your journey. I really appreciate it. Aunty you too, for
inviting me in your home.

V: We wish you all the best.

**Participant Four: Mahesh**

Reena (R): You already told me your age and what year you came to the U.S. (please see your
notes for these). Now, please tell me about your education.

Mahesh (M): My education… I did B.E. in Mechanical Engineering from India. I did masters in
U.S.A. from W. V. University in M. 1968.

R: What about your occupation?

M: I was an industrial engineer. I worked for 36 years for P. S. C.

R: That’s a long time.

M: Yes, that’s a long time, you know.

R: So, was that your first job when you started out?

M: Yes, that was my first job in the U.S.

R: And you stayed with P.S.C. for all those years. Now how about we start a little bit back,
before you came to the US. So, you came to the U.S. in the August of 1966. Tell me a little bit
about where you are from India, your family. What made you decide to come to the U.S?
M: I came to the U.S. for my further education. I was tired of doing the same routine job (in India) and I got (inaudible word here at 2:21:1) so I decided to come to United States for further study.

R: So, after you graduated in India from bachelors, you worked in India. Tell me a little bit about that.

M: I worked in a textile company for 18 months and then I decided to leave for further study in the US.

R: So, you worked for 18 months. How old were you when you graduated in India.

M: I was 24 years old.

R: So, you were quite young. Were you the first one in your family to get an engineering degree or anyone else worked as engineer or professional?

M: No, I was the first one to get a degree in engineer. My father was a stock broker and my two brothers, elder brother was in stock market and another one was studying to be a doctor and he is a pediatrician.

R: So, one of your brother was a doctor and another one was a stock broker and you were the first engineer.

M: Yes, that’s correct.

R: So, once you got your job in India, was it in Mumbai?

M: Yes.

R: You said that you worked for 18 months but you found the job boring. Tell me a little bit about that.

M: The job was mostly routine work, every day. There was nothing challenging in my work and the money was not that good too, you know.

R: So, it didn’t really challenge you, the job, but also it wasn’t paying as well.

M: That’s true.

R: This was right around 1965-66, is that when you were working in Mumbai?

M: Yes.

R: How did the idea of coming to the US occur to you? Did you already have family here? Did you hear of other people coming here?

M: All of my friends tried to come here. So, some of them were here too, in the U.S. So, I decided to come to this country.
R: You had school friends or family friends, you age who were here in the US and that’s how you thought about coming to the U.S.? Can you tell me more about that time?

M: Yes. My friends when I would speak with them, they would insist me to come to the U.S.

R: What did they tell you about the U.S. when they said that “maybe you should come here?”

M: They said, “there are a lot of opportunities in this country and (pause) and there is no limit here on how much you can make money here.” So….that’s it, you know.

R: Some of your friends were here, either getting education or in jobs, is that what was going on here with your friends who were already here?

M: Yes and they were doing some job here.

R: Now, you are kind of bored in your job in Mumbai and it’s not paying well and your friends in the US are saying come to the US, there are limitless opportunities here and make a lot of money and have a good life. Tell me a little bit about how did you make the decision to come here; how did you talk to your family?

M: One of my brothers was here in the U.S., the one is the doctor. He is in Chicago.

R: So, he was the first one to come to the U.S.? And when did he come to the U.S.?

M: He came 3-4 years before I did.

R: 3-4 years before you…was he going to school here or he was working as a doctor?

M: He had a job here.

R: Can you recall talking to him about coming to the U.S.? Did he encourage you?

M: He talked to me about U.S.

R: And what about you? Did you want to come here, did you have anxiety about it, leaving your home, leaving your family, can you tell me more?

M: I wanted to come to this country, you know because there were a lot of opportunities in this country so that’s why I decided to come here.

R: Did you have two minds about having to leave your family, your home, your support?

M: I did think about that you know, but I did not have any other options.

R: Can you help me understand that when you say, “you did not have options.”

M: First I have to fulfill my dream.

R: What was your dream?
M: To do my graduate study and (pause) to be more independent in my career too, moneywise, you know.

R: So, correct me if I am wrong, but I can almost see a bit of a tug of war, on the one hand you wanted to get more education and be more independent and making a life for yourself and on the other hand a little bit of hesitancy too about going to a new place, starting over….

M: Yes, you are right.

R: How did you talk to your parents and were there challenges, difficulties once you decided to come to the US? What kind of preparation you had to do? Did you talk to your parents and how did they feel about it?

M: At that time I told them that I will be back in five years.

R: You told them you would be back in five years, can you say more about that?

M: Because you know I did not want to stay more than five years outside the country, in the US, you know.

R: Why was that? What did you think that it would take five years?

M: I just told them that “I will be there for five years and come back.” They say, “That’s o.k.” you know. To get the first permission from them.

R: Oh, hang on… so that it would be a little easier to get permission from them you thought that if I say that I will go only for a short time?

M: That’s right. That was my intention when the first time I come to this country. My intention was that in five years, I will make enough money to recover all my borrowed expenses for travel and other things, you know.

R: Oh, ok. So, you had two things in mind: five years will make it easy to talk to my parents for permission to leave and come back and then also maybe five years will be enough to cover R: R: R: expenses and also to come back and start something in India? So, you really thought of going back within a short time?

M: Yes.

R: As you say that to me how do you feel about it, that at one time you had thought of going back in five years?

M: You know, in five years I decided that if I go to India, I have to work in a company and since I was working in a company here and there was no problem with the job there was no use starting over in (unclear audio) India.

R: Oh, I see by the time you were here in the US for five years, you were starting for the dream that you had… the job, the reason why you wanted to come to the US. How do you feel about it now?
M: Very good decision to stay in this country, in the U.S., you know.

R: Yeha, so how did it go when you….did you talk to your mother, your parents first, your brother here?

M: My mother deceased at that time and my father had also passed away when I was 6 years old.

R: So, who did you talk about coming here? Whose permission you needed?

M: My elder brother who was in India and I was living with him.

R: And how did he respond?

M: He said, “It’s ok. Whatever you want to do, that’s your business.”

R: So, it was fine with him?

M: Yeha,

R: Did anybody have any concerns, you had any concerns about it?

M: No.

R: So, how about, you mentioned expenses to come to the U.S….

M: Expenses were paid by my elder brother who was in India.

R: So, he paid for your expenses to come to the U.S…can you tell me about the visa?

M: I came on the student visa first. The student visa lasted about (pause) three years and then you know, my family sponsored me and P.S.C. sponsored me and then I got my permanent visa. After five years, I got my citizenship.

R: Ok, so you were on student visa for about three years. Were you on work visa?

M: No, permanent residency.

R: So, when you applied for your job they applied for your citizenship?

M: Yes,

R: So, looks like, by early 1971-1972, you became a resident…


R: Ok, so P.S.C. sponsored you. So, when you were getting ready to come to the U.S., were there any challenges, looks like finances might be…it is generally very expensive to come to the U.S…. were there other challenges?

M: No, I don’t think there was difficulties at that time to my life. All the finances were paid by my brother and I was prepared to come to this country.
R: You were determined to come to the U.S. How was it leaving that home, you called India your home until then, how was leaving family, your home?

M: Well, I felt bad about leaving them, but I did not have any choice. I had to (inaudible here, maybe it is ‘determine what is best for the family.

R: So, it was difficult to say goodbye, to leave family, something that was so familiar.

M: Yes,

R: But you also were, sounds like driven by responsibility to yourself and to your family at that time.

M: Yes.

R: Can you help me understand you said, you felt that you had no choice.

M: I wanted to finish…I wanted to fulfill my dream, you know so I did not have a choice. So, I leave them and come here, you know.

R: Were you worried about certain things, you had never been outside India, you had never been to the U.S., right. So, what kinds of thoughts came to your mind when you say, packing your bags, buying your ticket, getting your visa?

M: (Pause). I was worried about my mother as her health was not good and my wife was there in India.

R: So, you were already married…how long?

M: About nine months.

R: So, you had your young wife whom you were leaving behind to come here. That must be very difficult for you and her.

M: Yes.

R: Can you tell me more about that, how did you talk to her about coming to the US and cope with it?

M: I told her that I have to go for further study. It is a good step for our new life and she agreed (to) that, you know.

R: What did she say?

M: Just go ahead.

R: So, she encouraged you, she supported you.

M: Yes, she supported me.
R: How was it…I made a false assumption that you weren’t married, but you were married at that time. Did you know how quickly you would get her here? How did you cope with that?

M: I knew that I am going to get her as soon as I finish my education and get my first job. Then, I tried to finish my education as soon as possible.

R: So you promised her that you were going to finish your education as soon as possible and try and get a job and get her here?

M: Yes.

R: And how did she react to it?

M: She said, “It’s ok.” And I felt supported by her. That encouraged me to finish my masters.

R: Do you have any memories of getting on the plane, saying goodbye to faI, your family, first few days here, did you come to?

M: I came to Pittsburgh first.

R: Can you tell me about those first few days?

M: I did not have any car or nothing you know so I have to go and get grocery and then I have to cook by myself, wash and clean everything by myself, there is no help or nothing and nothing I did in India by myself. So, plus I have to do a whole lot of study so there was too much to do.

R: So, when you landed in Pittsburgh, did you stay with someone or did you go straight to your Univ.

M: Straight (to) university and I found an apartment in M.

R: Sounds like it must be a big change for you?

M: Yes.

R: In what way did things change for you when you came here?

M: From a married life to a bachelor life, you know. That makes lot of changes to me because I have to cook by myself, clean everything, bring groceries and do my homework too.

R: So, suddenly you find that you have to do everything by yourself. I believe it is not like that for Indian males. It is usually the mother who takes care of everything or wife or sister. So how did you cope with that change?

M: I have to do it regardless of what happened or what I was used to. So, I did not have a choice. (In audible)….I started working hard.

R: So, when you came here, that determination that, “I am here for a purpose, I am responsible to my family and my dream.” Sounds like that really motivated you.
M: Yes, I set up my goals, you know.

R: What were your goals?

M: To finish my education as soon as possible; I should find a job and to get A. to the U.S.

R: That shows quite a bit of, very resourceful and determined as well.

M: Yes, I was very determined (about achieving my goals).

R: So, once you got here it must be very difficult without a car and culture too. Did you speak English and was language ever a problem?

M: Yes, I spoke English so that was not a problem.

R: How did you find your university and living in Morgantown? Were there other Indians there?

M: There were some Indian friends too, you know. Some of them in the engineering dept.

R: There were other Indians in your department?

M: There were about 30 students and some of them were Indians.

R: When you saw other Indian students, how did you feel?

M: Well, that was a pretty good one because there were a lot of challenges and competition so it helped that other Indians were there.

R: So, you felt supported?

M: Yes.

R: Tell me a little bit about your time at the University, your program, how were you treated there?

M: They treated me very good, you know.

R: In what way?

M: They told me what course I have to select and helped me in my studies too you know.

R: So, there was someone who guided you. How did you adjust to the education system which is different than how it is in India?

M: We had an advisor. Once in a month we used to get together and he advised me on what courses I have to take and what all I am doing.

R: So, you had feedback from advisor and guidance. Did that help to adjust and how did you perform.

M: Very good.
R: At the end of your first semester or year, how did you feel?

M: First semester, I did not do that well, you know, because the whole system was new to me. So, but from the second semester I decided to deal with these problems.

R: What was difficult about that first semester?

M: Well, the way I was studying, there was a different way. I was studying just like I was in India, but here there is a different way to study here.

R: What was the difference?

M: I memorized everything. In India you memorize everything but here you don’t memorize anything. You just go to the subject and keep in mind the practical things.

R: So, once you realized that by the end of your first semester, you started to study differently.

M: Yes and that helped a lot.

R: Did you get advice about this from someone, other students, your advisor?

M: I actually figured it out by myself.

R: You again used your own observation and instinct to adjust but in the beginning it must be difficult.

M: Yes,

R: What about other fellow students, Indians and Americans? Your relationship with them.

M: There were just friends, not much contact.

R: Did you just go to class with them, study with them outside of class?

M: Socially, I just interacted with my Indian friends, not with Americans.

R: Can you say more about that? Was that a choice or it just happened that way?

M: That was a decision… (inaudible) I just didn’t have a lot of time (to do anything else) outside of study because I was pressed by the time. I had to all this cooking, and cleaning, plus these assignments and plus work study. I was focusing on the work.

R: So, you did not have time to socialize and leisure and you were on a goal. How did you feel about talking to your professors as it is different in India? For example, your advisor?

M: Advisor was good to talk to me and looking for my progress all the time and he was satisfied with my progress and….

R: Did Morgantown have any Indian grocery stores? How did you cope with all the changes with the food, laundry etc. challenges like that?
M: There was no Indian grocery store there at that time and the only thing we used to eat was bread, juice, and beans…pinto beans and like that one and rice and nothing else.

R: That must be a big change for you?

M: Yes that’s correct, but we did not have much choice, you know. Since I am a vegetarian so we don’t eat meat or nothing else, you know. So, I learned to cook here and cooking and cleaning both.

R: So, you are surviving beans and rice without an indian grocery store. Did you miss food from home at that time?

M: Yes, I adjusted here and learned to cook here.

R: Can you tell me a little bit more about that first year here, all the changes and adjustments you had to make?

M: I had to make some adjustments, you know, about…for eating of food. For surviving I can eat it at that time. I ha fruits and vegetables and I survived on them, you know.

R: How did you feel about U.S. once you were here? You must have imagined how U.S. would be and then you came here, what did you think of it?

M: I thought I like it U.S.A. because there is lot of freedom here and there is no hassle for anything, for foo or. There is plenty of juice and fruit here at reasonable prices. So, that’s why I decided to stay in this country.

R: So, you found that there were less challenges here to grow, can you give me an example?

M: In India, you know you have to stand in a line for your rationing card and you also don’t get milk, even when you stand in a line for milk. So, that’s why a lot of hassles, for all these basic things. But here there are no hassles for anything, you know.

R: Oh, ok. Because you come from a different India and generation than I did. There was a lot of hassle even for basic things in India which was not the case here and that’s what appealed to you.

M: Yes.

R: So, you have to correct me if I am wrong, so you thought that life can be a little easier here?

M: Yes, I do believe that.

R: How did that early experience, that you did not have to stand in a line for basic things; there were plenty of fruits and vegetables an constantly worry and hardship. How did that make you feel?

M: I feel very good, you know. Being here in this country because I can get transportation or medical emergency, I can get it done here.
R: It was not only about milk and vegetables, but you noticed that even medical care was better here. When did you begin to think that it was the right decision to come here?

M: 1966 I came here, it might be when I started my job here with P.S.C. and at that time I decided to stay in this country.

R: So, once you had the job, once you had 3-4 years here and job that really helped you make up your mind that this is where I want to be now and I don’t want to go back.

M: Yes.

R: How did you take that decision?

Breaks here to drink some water and his medication.

R: So, did you finish your education in time, did you stay with that goal, how long did it take?

M: It took about 18 months to finish my masters because I changed my line from mechanical engineering to industrial engineering that’s why I had to one semester more otherwise it would finish in 12 months, you know.

R: Why did you decide to change?

M: Because industrial engineering was more challenging and that time very few courses in India offering that (industrial engineering), but here in the US there were so many universities that were offering this course. That’s why I decided to come to this country.

R: Oh, ok, so you wanted to do trial engineering. So, once you graduated, tell me about trying to find a job and finding the job with Pgh Steel company.

M: I applied so many companies, you know.

R: How did you find about jobs?

M: By that time there were some advertisements of companies and what do you call it….that finds jobs for you….

R: Oh, you mean a job search company?

M: Yes, I went to a job search company and I went to them and they try to find a job for me and they found a job for me.

M: How did you find out that you could actually go to these companies?

M: I heard about that from my friends. They told me to go to job recruiters, you know and then I just went there and fill out the forms and they started to look for a job for me.

R: Once you knew….how was it interviewing for P.S.C.? Did you have to interview?
M: The process was very easy, you know because the interview they asked me only one question, “where is your wife?” and I said, “She is in India.” So that’s it no more further questions.

R: They asked you just one question, about your wife, that’s it?

M: Yes.

R: How did you feel about that, were you surprised?

M: Yes, I was because I thought I am not going to get that job, but finally they tell me that I am qualified for the job.

R: Why did you think that you were not going to get the job?

M: Because they did not ask me any questions that’s why and that was about…

R: Your wife…. Did you imagine why that question?

M: I don’t know. They got all my background from my professors, before I got there. They provided all the references for me, my background. And so they decided to offer me the job.

R: So, when the offer came how did you feel?

M: I feel good because that was the first offer I got in my life.

R: Can you say more?

M: That was the first job offer and I was not sure, you know, where to go if I don’t have that job.

R: So, there was a lot on line.

M: Yes, I had only $20 left in my pocket at that time, you know. So, I didn’t have a choice to look for another job. I accepted this job, first job. That’s it.

R: I can barely imagine, you have to tell me if I am wrong. On the one hand you have finished your education, but only have $20 in your pocket. You have your responsibility, your family’s back home in India and now you must have a job now, so how did you feel when this job offer came?

M: I accepted the job, you know, right away. What would you do if you are in my position, you know?

R: That is a very good question (both laugh). I would take the job, right away. It would be difficult to deal with all this uncertainty. Did you have your brother’s support here?

M: My brother was in Canada at that time, he was very far.

R: How did you feel?
M: I felt alone at times. I felt depressed about money situation too, you know. I just had 2025 left in my pocket. So, I used to go to my friend’s house on the weekend and just stay there. So, I did not have to spend any money on anything.

R: Where were these friends?

M: They were in M.

R: Were they Gujarati?

M: Yes.

R: You knew them from India?

M: No, I met them in M. and they supported me at that time. In weekend, I used to go to them and to Pittsburgh, I used to travel by Greyhound. From M. to Pittsburgh.

R: So, there was some hardship during that time.

M: Yes.

R: Did you miss home, did you think about India?

M: At that time I was thinking about India, (whether) I was better off in India than this country.

R: So, that thought crossed your mind that may be this was not such a good idea. Can you tell me more about that?

M: After I didn’t have any job here and then I was very depressed and looking for a job and went to the employment office, but since there was no job right away so…

R: Did you at that point you think that “I wanna go back home and was better off there?”

M: Some of the time I felt bad about staying in this country, you know, because I was spending my brother’s money unnecessarily.

R: Right, the brother who had helped you to get here.

M: Yes, because I had his money too you know, so if I wouldn’t have got a job within 15 days, then I would have gone back to India, you know.

R: Oh, wow. Thinking about it now, how does it strike you that you came this close to going back?

M: (pause) There was no alternative too, you know. I had to think of some other alternatives too and had to decide what to do next.

R: So, the next best alternative was to go back home to India?

M: Yes.
R: What was the time between graduating and getting the job with P.S.C.?

M: 15 days.

R: Did you anytime feel that being an Indian could be challenging to get a job?

M: Yes, that too, you know. Because you know, they were not sure if I was going to stay in this country for long, so they have to invest the money for me you know, so they don’t want to take any chances at that time so and (inaudible)… there were enough Americans to fight for that job.

R: So, you thought that there are other Americans with whom they don’t have to take that chance and if they hire me, they have to take chance?

M: Yes and they have to invest a lot of money, you know. I interviewed for the job, but I don’t know what is in their mind maybe they think that (I will stay for 1-2 years), but I have to tell them that I am going to stay with them.

R: It could be gamble for them. That worried you that could keep them from hiring you. Once you get hired, how were first few years working for them?

M: Pretty good.

R: Did you like your job?

M: I liked my job. I did job evaluation and time study for the processing of the steel.

R: How was the work environment, your boss and your colleagues?

M: Pretty good. They are more supportive to me because I was a foreigner to them. That’s why they support me.

R: In what way?

M: They helped me find an apartment here in this area and also you know they supported me to get my wife from India to here. Because I have to get some bank letters; get some money to deposit, but (needed) more than $500, so one of my friends, American friends lent me $500 and then I put it in my back account and also got letter from the bank that I have enough to support my wife, so that’s why you know.

R: So, that American friend helped you out?

M: Yes.

R: Were you surprised by that? As a foreigner, an outsider…

M: Yes, I was surprised too, you know because I worked there only for one month and he gave me $500 and I gave it back right away, that check back, once I get that letter.

R: How did they treat you when you started work there?
M: Very nicely.

R: Where did you find your first apartment?

M: In C. and lived there for about…couple of months…7-8 months and found another apartment. We moved a few times in those early years.

R: When did A. come here after you got your job?

M: Two years since I first came and after job, maybe 5-6 months.

R: Let me ask you this, you said that you had goals. One big reason to come to the US was to fulfill your dream: Finish education, get a job. At that point you had finished your education and you had a job. How did it feel?

M: I feel pretty good that my dream…I accomplished all that.

R: And India….how did you think of India and Mumbai at that time?

M: We made some visit too. After I started my job, after four years, we went there, back.

R: In those first 4-5 years, how did you think of US and how did you think of India, in terms of home?

M: I think U.S.A., much better than India because of all these convenient things here, you know.

R: Did you remember beginning to feel at home here or were you homesick?

M: No, I feel at home here, you know. After I did not feel homesick. We consider this our home, United States.

R: This is your home now? Did that happen over a period of time…help me understand that.

M: (Pause)… We decided that this is our home because of all these convenience and freedom. And all these activities we had.

R: You may wonder that this is a strange question for me to ask, the one about home. You see, I have been here in the US for 10 years, but there are still times when I refer to it as ‘home.’ But I also feel that US is also kind of my ‘home.’ So, I feel torn between torn between two places…

M: I wasn’t sure you know, which to call home, U.S.A. or India, but after couple of years we thought “this is our home here and let’s buy our home.

R: So, do you think that when you actually bought a home, a physical home, that was kind of a turning point that “maybe now this is our home, not just this home, but this country is our home?”

M: Yes.

R: So, buying that house further consolidated the feeling that “we are here now?”
M: Yes. Since 1979 we have been in this house and we built this home.
M: I can imagine that must a big risk and investment for you.
M: Yes, absolutely, it was a big investment and I was also not sure about my job. After 1982 and 1983, the steel industry was in bad shape, it was not doing very good. After four years of building this house, it was going down, the industry.
R: Did you have trouble getting loan, with mortgage because of being an Indian, a foreigner?
M: No, not at all.
R: It sounds like once you had your wife here, you had education, a job and you built this house, it felt this where home is and life is…
M: Yes.
R: When your wife came here how was it for both of you?
M: It was pretty good, you know.
R: Were there challenges during those first few years?
M: There were not disadvantages, one of the advantages was I wasn’t a bachelor any more (we both laugh).
R: How did you feel when she came here?
M: Pretty good, you know.
R: How do you think it was for her in the beginning? She left everyone there in India and came here.
M: Yes, I think she was worried and in the starting she did not like it here.
R: What do you think was going on?
(At this point, his wife, who overheard us from the kitchen, chimed in and said, “language” and we both laugh).
M: Yes, she had a language problem and she didn’t want to stay in this country, you know.
R: Why do you think that was, what did she share with you at that time?
M: That “I want to go back home.” She was missing home and family and alone. There were no Indian family in this area.
R: There were no Indian family…
M: And then one Indian family move after she came down here.
R: So, she was here and that was what you had promised her, but when she comes here she is lonely and you didn’t have a car…

M: Yes, no car and not that many Gujaratis or Indians here.

R: Oh, ok. So how did both of you cope with that?

M: She tried watching the TV, you know, but she didn’t understand much of that language.

R: How did you cope with that?

M: These are good questions, but I don’t know (laughs)

R: It’s too close to home, these questions?

M: Yeha.

R: Did you find yourself helping her out…how did you help her adjust?

M: She joined English classes at the YMCA.

R: So she started to take English classes?

M: And she learnt English by watching that channel (on the TV)…what is that channel? Channel 13…PBS.

R: So, she started to take classes and some from TV.

(Once again, here, his wife interjects and says, Sesame Street and (by talking with) neighbor’s kids).

R: I see, so how was setting up home and those first few years, of her being here and moving from apartments?

M: We had some challenges in finding apartments, you know. They wouldn’t rent to foreigners. They would not open the door. They would look at us and say, “no.”

R: How did you feel when you encountered that?

M: I feel bad, but nothing can be done. That’s their apartment so they can decide whether they want to rent it to me or not.

R: I see. So, you had to look for more apartments?

M: Yes.

R: Were there other experiences similar to that, say at work? Being Indian getting in your way like discrimination, at work or at the grocery store?
M: Only one incident. At the store…once we went to get diapers for my son and then they say, “we are out of it.” And they were not offering to look at the back of the store, but I found some there. And they say, “oh…” and then they gave me the diapers, you know.

R: So, they mistreated you?

M: Yes.

R: What about at your job, did you ever feel that you were treated differently and otherwise as well in all these years of living here?

M: No, not any problems with them (at work).

R: A. came, you have the home and move in…tell me about your children.. how was having children here?

M: That was a pretty good one, you know. Am. was born in 79, N. was born in 81 and (pause)…

R: How has it been raising a family here in the US?

M: I didn’t have any experience raising a family in India, but I can tell you that the best thing in this country is that you can get anything with money you know. That means that you can buy things that you cannot afford in India. All the toys, you know and…

R: (In Gujarati) when you were raising your children here, were there any other Indian, Gujarati families here?

M: No, there were no families here.

R: So, how was it for them, you think? In the school and at home?

M: In the school they were alone, you know. After that they made some friends, American friends, later on.

R: What about raising children in terms of religion, values as there wasn’t an Indian or Gujarati community here. What kind of challenges did that present?

M: Once when Am. was around 6 years, we started to go to Pittsburgh, to Gujarati school and then 2-3 years, we went for and then he did not want to go to that school and it was also too far. It would take an hour to go and come back. So, it was a bit tiring.

R: So, it sounds like you and your wife, both wanted to teach them Gujarati and Indian values. Was there any challenges with wanting to do that as they were born here and going to school here, having American friends…

M: It’s hard to go back to Indian values, you know

R: What were some of those for you?

M: To go to temple every day, then all these prayers, then (pause)…
R: How did you adjust not having opportunities to do all of that here? How did you continue to do some of that at home or here in the U.S.?

M: Try to explain to them that “this is our culture, whether you take it or not is up to you.” There is no…nothing else to do. “Whatever you think is the best thing.” You have to accept that, you know.

R: That’s very interesting as that’s not how it happens in India, right? That this is our culture and our values and you can decide…

M: Yes.

R: How did they respond to it?

M: They responded well, you know.

R: What do you think was positive about it for them?

M: We told them that Jainism is our religion and we don’t eat any meat. All these things, mostly that and also eggs, we don’t eat. Similarly, they don’t eat if there is any fish oil. Purely vegetarian, you know.

R: So, it seems that raising them here in a different culture, at home or school, was it even challenging, for example, at school it’s different and at home it’s different?

M: They felt, sometimes, you know, different way. But after that they accepted everything, that “we are Jains.” They admit and that’s why they don’t eat meat.

R: Did you speak Gujarati at home and English outside of home? How did you navigate that?

M: We speak Gujarati at home with them and Amit knows Gujarati very well and Nilesh knows, but he cannot speak Gujarati that well.

R: How do you feel about that?

M: I am glad that they can understand.

R: Looking back, does anything stand out for you, as they were going to school, you built a home here, a family. How would you describe that time?

M: It was a pretty good time, you know.

R: What was good about it?

M: I fulfill my dreams and all these challenges that came to my way and I succeeded in that challenges.

R: You not only just though about your dreams, but you worked very hard, overcame all these challenges and made a home here and raise a family here?
M: Yes.

R: What about your social life by this time? Were there other Gujarati or other Indian families now?

M: There were some Gujarati families here by then, also the shop, the Patel Store and we usually go to their houses, we meet them there. We make something of a program such as party or something and we attend whenever we are free.

R: How do you think the (Gujarati, Indian) community has changed over the years?

M: I am not sure, it’s hard to answer that question.

R: There is a Gujarati Samaj here and a considerable community. So, for example, when I came to the US, I knew that I would not be that isolated and that there would be a lot of Indians and Gujaratis. But this was not the case for you, for first 10 years even. That’s what I was thinking about?

M: I think it’s good because there is more opportunities for social support and sense of community. So you don’t feel as alone. I think what we had to face to adjust back then is different than Indians who come now.

R: I know we are getting close to the hour. You said that at the end of your first four years, you went back to India. Did you went back with your wife?

M: Yes.

R: How was it going back home…going back to India after living here for four years?

M: That was a good time, you know. We had a good time there to meet all these relatives, but after that, you know, once we came to this country, we come back here. We like it more here because of less struggle compared to India.

R: Have you continued to go back to India in all these years?

M: Yes.

R: How is it going back for you and how has that been over all these years?

M: We go back mainly to meet our relatives and that’s it, you know. To say in touch with family there.

R: So, how has that changed? When you go back to India what’s your impression of India and about going back?

M: Going back temporarily is ok, but not permanently, you know.

R: Can you say more about that.
M: Because there are a lot of hassles there and a lot of (pause) transformations and all these things are...there is more trouble we have to face.

R: That’s something you said about living there even before you came to the US, that there is a lot of hardship there. Is that something that stayed with you?

M: Yes, life is difficult there. Every time I go back, I notice that. The population is increased a lot and there are problems, such as phone service. If you have a problem with them and call to complain, they just transfer you from one department to the next. There is a lot of bureaucracy. Here you just have to make one call and that would be enough to take care of the problem.

R: Did you, in those 15 days you thought I might have to go back. In all these years, have there been times where that thought has crossed your mind, “that I want to return to India?”

M: No. That was the only time I had a rough time and never thought about it again.

R: Have your friends who came here from India around the same time, talked about returning to India?

M: A couple of friends went back, you know.

R: If you were to describe yourself before you came to the US and after, how would you do it?

M: When I came to this country, I was very energetic to know about this country and to study further and get educated and then after that, in the U.S.A., once I stayed in this country and got a job, I realized my dream. And then (pause)

R: I was curious about how you see yourself, as American, Indian, Gujarati....

M: I (inaudible, could be ‘feel like’) an American, but usually, you know I consider myself a Gujarati and an Indian. So, I spend my money wisely and not the American way and make sure my kids are happy and that about family that everything is good. That family is most important.

R: That is the Gujarati and the Indian foundation in you?

M: Yes.

R: What is American in you?

M: (long pause) To obey all the laws of this country and what it takes to help and support this country in whatever way I can, you know.

R: That’s very interesting. You want to support this country in whatever way you can. Why is that?

M: (long pause) support it politically by my right to vote, being a citizen. Because I can express the freedom of my vote too, you know.

R: So, you feel that...you have returned to the idea of freedom, which attracted you to this country in the first place.
M: Yes.

R: Is that what you may say is American in you….

M: Yes, the idea of freedom and choice. That was and is important to me. It is also the culture of this country.

R: How do you think that might have been different if you would have been in India?

M: I don’t know, I can’t say.

R: You said you want to support this country, can you give me an example?

M: Because this is our country, you know. So, we have to support them either financially or any way we can support this country.

R: Does that remind you of ‘standing by your responsibility’ that you talked about earlier? You feel a sense of responsibility to this country?

M: Yes.

R: Hmm, ok. Is there anything else that comes up for you as we have talked so far that was important for you to discuss, but we haven’t yet had a chance to?

M: No, everything is covered, I think so.

R: If, you were to communicate to someone how it feels to be a Gujarati-Indian, American here, how would you describe it? How it is to live in this country?

M: (Long Pause) In this world, U.S. is the best place to stay here because you can manage income, expenses and everything and also you can raise your family and without any problems and you have all these opportunities to learn and make a…money. There is no limit on these things.

R: If you are ready to work hard, you will find opportunities and reward and safety. Do you see difference between people who have come to the U.S. more recently, like me and yourself?

M: (Long Pause) There is a difference and it depends on your purpose to come to this country, whether education or job. It differs from individual to individual and their goals. But what is similar is that they are also looking for opportunities.

R: Ok. I think we are done. I would like to thank you for your time and doing this interview for me. Do you have any questions or comments for me?

M: No.