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BALANCING TWO WORLDS: FEMALE INDO-FIJIAN IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN THEIR  
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOMAINS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE  
NEW HYBRIDITY

A Thesis for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
The University of Mississippi

By

NITASHA ALI

April 2011

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## ABSTRACT

In the last 20 years immigration in Canada has increased due to the relaxed immigration laws. With such an increase it is vital to understand immigrant youth experiences in terms of how they express their national and cultural identity, how they negotiate different expectations of their host and homeland cultures, and how they identify themselves at a personal level. Many immigrant youths are faced with conflict, deriving from pressures of living in a new society and culture as well as pressure from their family and the homeland culture. These conflicts and expectations also have a gendered layer in that female immigrant youths have different experiences growing up than their male counterparts. As a result, young immigrant females struggle with keeping their life balanced which results in a separation of their two world and cultures. Scholars typically understand such separation to result in the formation of a hybrid identity.

Using a case study of female Indo-Fijian immigrant youth in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, I discuss the concept of hybridity through investigating the way in which the public and school life and the private and home life influence the expression of ethnicity, nationality, and identity. There is a clear distinction between the public life and the private life. I argue that instead of a synthetic identity of hybridity that, in fact, immigrant youths gravitate towards the culture of their host country and consciously move away from their homeland culture. However, their private and home life expectations pull them back towards their homeland culture. The identity that results from this tension is what I call the “new hybrid”. By using the native ethnographer

approach, I demonstrate that ethnicity, nationality, and identity are complex and multi-faceted and its expression is influenced by their social domains and individual agency.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mum and dad for instilling the notion that success does not come easy and for their love and encouragement throughout this process. It is also dedicated to my sister for her continued support and counsel.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL English as a second language

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

My research focuses on first generation female Indo-Fijian immigrant youth in Vancouver, British Columbia. I address the different experiences of individuals growing up and attending high school in Vancouver. The purpose of my work is to address and explore some of the issues that female Indo-Fijian immigrants youth face, to identify the specific challenges in the settlement process, to highlight issues of personal and national identity and how these came about, to identify the differences between parental and youth expectations and to recognize the gaps between the views of the parents and those of the youths.

Immigrant youths have to adjust to a new environment and ultimately decide where they belong all while balancing external and internal pressures. Immigrant youths are faced with retaining cultural expectations and norms of their homeland primarily for their parent's peace of mind. They also have to adjust and negotiate norms and expectation of their new host culture. They are burdened with learning a new language for their benefit as well as for the benefit for their family. The female youth especially is constantly struggling with gendered expectations and notions of acceptable behavior between their public and private lives. The stress of keeping both the public and the private life balanced leads to a dual identity in which both lives are kept separate from one another.

Immigration is a worldwide occurrence that affects millions of people in many different nations (Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder 2006: 304). There are a number of factors why individuals engage in immigration that range from political instability in the homeland to potential enhanced opportunities in the host country, such as economic position, an opportunity for a better life, a possibility for a safe and healthy life, and a chance to attend a better

educational facility (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 118). Scholarship shows, in fact, that the most fundamental motivation for immigration is the potential for new opportunities for individuals and their offspring in a new country.

The focus of this thesis is immigrants in Canada where there has been a tremendous increase in the number of immigrants between 1986 and 1991 (Dyson 2005: 50). In particular, I will examine the lives of young immigrant females from Fiji who moved to Canada. Due to the political unrest and economic instability in Fiji produced by the 1987 military coup the motivation for individuals to participate in immigration was immense. This coup especially affected the Indian Fijian population, and many of them migrated out of Fiji. Despite the large literature on immigration, Indian Fijian immigrants in Canada are usually an overlooked population as they are more often categorized as part of a larger East Indian immigrant population.

Most scholarship on immigrant experiences focus on the adult experiences of moving to a new land. What is fundamentally missing in the literature is the experiences and the journey that the immigrant child endures in the new host country (Shahsiah 2006: 1). Most often the experiences of a youth are essentially different than that of the adult experience, and youths face unique struggles in terms of adjusting or refuting their new culture and maintaining or refuting their homeland culture. Understanding immigrant youths and their experiences can provide a better understanding of the processes of immigration and the challenges and opportunities that immigrants face in their new homes.

I investigate first generation female Indo-Fijian immigrants and their experiences growing up and attending high school in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. I have a personal attachment to this population because I myself am a Fijian immigrant who has grown

up in Vancouver. I explore what makes the struggles of these young women and girls different and unique from others growing up in Canada. I explore such things as the cultural norms and expectations from both the Canadian culture and Fijian culture as well as how these young immigrants negotiate these expectations.

The purpose of this research is to highlight the personal journey of each individual. I feel that it is important to study individualistic experiences and gain understanding on their own terms with their own words. It is important because through their voices, one can gain an understanding of how immigrant status personally affected these young women growing up in Vancouver. Studying these women on an individual level and in their words provides for an insider perspective on their personal identity in their different cultures.

For this thesis, I have conducted research among individuals who were born in Fiji but who migrated to Canada and attended high school in Vancouver. These individuals self-identified themselves as immigrants from Fiji. The term immigrant as I use it refers to an individual who was not born in Canada but who now resides in the country, the term in this case does not attach a meaning to legal documentation.

My primary goal is to study the experiences that female Fijian immigrants encounter during their school years in Vancouver. As many acknowledge these are the developmental years in a youth's life. I to address how being an immigrant may have shaped their identities not only in the past and during high school but also in the process of self-identification throughout the years immediately following high school graduation.

It is important to discuss and comprehend the different social worlds and domains that female Indo-Fijian immigrants partake in. The most fundamental social worlds being the public and the private. The public domain as defined here is the school environment and everything

that it encompasses, such as involvement in various after school sports, student councils, drama club, and any other extracurricular activities. The private domain is the home and family life and includes family functions and family involvement within the home and when out with family members. I explore how expectations in each domain varies, and I investigate any difficulties that arise for the individuals involved. My hypothesis is that the expectations between the home and private life and the high school public life make these young women understand themselves to be part of two different cultures, that of their Fijian culture and that of their Canadian culture. These expectations presented by each culture can affect an individual's personal identity, which can essentially lead to a dismissal of one of the cultures that they are involved in.

Immigrant youth are faced with pressures from their new society as well as from their home and family. At home these pressures include abiding by cultural norms and staying respectful to their homeland culture. At the same time these youths must address expectations from their school setting. Attending school in Canada is a fundamental part of an immigrant youth's life, and at school they are surrounded by many influential figures such as friends, peers, others from the same immigrant community, teachers, and friends from the host country. Pressures from school include such things as knowing and understanding a new language, their role within the classroom and in school, and fitting in with their peers. In addition, female immigrants do not have the same experiences as their male counterparts. For example, females at home are expected to be compliant and help domestically whereas males are allowed to be social outside of the home without any responsibilities of chores at home. At school females must demonstrate that they are sociable and independent, whereas, males are expected to be independent both in and out of the home.

The challenge of keeping a balanced public and private life often times results in a separation of a person's two worlds and a notion of dual identities. My research will expose the process of how certain individuals belonging to the Indo-Fijian immigrant community deal with this separation. In terms of these Indo-Fijian immigrant women, a dual identity often refers to a separate persona, an identity that belongs to their public school lives yet is kept secret from their family and others that are part of their private lives. Overtime, many begin the process of balancing the two cultures. However, although much scholarship proposes that a hybrid, or blended identity emerges, this research proposes that a "new hybrid" can emerge wherein the immigrant maintains two separate identities.

During this process of analyzing my informants' experiences I study, I also examine myself. Being a Fijian immigrant to Canada, it is virtually impossible for me to separate myself from the research I conduct. In chapters four and five I use my own auto-ethnography along with the narratives of the women I studied in which I explore my experiences growing up as an Indo-Fijian immigrant in Canada.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW



### Fijian-Canadian Immigration

The number of immigrants has increased in Canada over the last 20 years. Such an increase affects immigrant youth in terms of self-identification, national identity, and expectations presented to them by their host and homeland cultures. The literature on immigrant's, however, focuses primarily on adult experiences. "Less research has been conducted with immigrant youth, despite the fact that available studies suggest that adolescents may experience considerable difficulties following migration" (Sharir 2002: 1). My research, which focuses on female Indo-Fijian immigrant youths in Canada and their experiences growing up as an immigrant in Vancouver, British Columbia, adds an important component to immigration studies.

Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006: 304), Sharir (2002: 1) and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 1) have noted that migration and immigration is a worldwide phenomenon that involves millions of people and most countries around the globe. Sharir (2002: 1) cites that there are more individuals who live outside their country of origin now than at any time in history. Immigration has been viewed in a number of lights, from a source of problems to an opportunity for individuals and society (Berry et al. 2006: 304). Many individuals decide to immigrate because their homeland nation is under immense civil turmoil and the chance to immigrate offers opportunity in a new land. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 118) suggest that immigration is the result of a number of factors, including a chance for a better life, for a better economic position, for safer lives, for healthier lives, for better educational opportunities, as well as escaping from civil war and/ or military coups.

Canada was a country that was largely settled by immigrants from northern Europe (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 765; Sharir 2002: 2). Since the establishment of the country in 1867, white, English-speaking immigrants have dominated all aspects of the social and political scene in Canada (Sharir 2002: 2). In 1910, the Canadian government passed the Immigration Act which established “the right to prohibit immigrants of any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada” (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 770). As migration increased this act was used to enforce barriers to the migration of certain ethnic groups (Sharir 2002: 2). An anti-Asiatic bias emerged as the Canadian immigration legislation and procedures showed a preference for migrants from Anglo-Europe (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 770).

In the 1960’s, Canada aimed to improve its international standing, especially with non-white countries within the Commonwealth and United Nations (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 771). Canada then moved from a racially discriminatory legislation to a universalistic system of migrant assessment (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 771). Canada then adopted the Immigration Act of 1967 which prohibited discriminatory immigration practices and, in 1971, Canada adopted an official policy of multiculturalism (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 766; Sharir 2002: 4). As a consequence of these policies there was a shift in Canadian immigration patterns, the result being that there were fewer migrants from Europe and an increase of migrants from Asia and the Middle East (Sharir 2002: 4). Dyson (2005: 50) notes that in Canada there was an overwhelming increase in the number of immigrants between 1986 and 1991. With the loosening of immigration laws, there was an increase in Asian and Pacific Island immigrants to Canada. This work focuses on a wave of migrants from Fiji during this time period.

The Fiji Islands are located in the southwest Pacific, the total land area is spread across 250,000 square miles of water (Lal 1992: 3). “Of the three hundred or so Islands that make up

the Fijian archipelago, only about a third are inhabited or capable of sustaining prolonged human habitation” (Lal 1992: 3). The Fiji islands were first inhabited approximately 3,500 years ago when peoples of Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and the New Guinea region migrated to the Fiji Islands (Lal 1992: 4). The descendants of these inhabitants are referred to today as the Native or Indigenous Fijians. The islands were first exposed to Dutch colonists in 1643, when Dutch explorers charted some of the islands but did not land on any of them (Lal 1992: 8). Over the next 100 years, a number of European explorers passed by the islands in an attempt to increase their knowledge of the Pacific Islands and by the eighteenth century the vague outlines of Fiji were well known to the outside world (Lal 1992: 8). The European writings at the time portrayed the islands’ people as aggressive and violent, and Fiji became known as the Cannibal Islands (Lal 1992: 8). Fiji became a British Crown Colony on October 10, 1874 (Lal 1992: 11).

In 1879, during British rule, indentured laborers were brought from South Asia, primarily India, to work in the local plantations (Kelly 1995/1998: 173). Laboring on the cane plantations and in sugar factories, they were a substitute labor force because the indigenous labor forces were not sufficient (Jayawardena 1980: 431). The majority of the laborers came from the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India (Jayawardena 1980: 431). Today, these individuals and their descendants are referred to as Indo-Fijians or Indians. The new-comers were administered by officials who had previous experience with immigration (Jayawardena 1980: 432). Still, major problems arose in Fiji as a result of the rapid growth, economic advancement, and the political assertiveness of the Indo-Fijian community (Kelly 1998: 173; Lal 1992: 74). Then, Fiji experienced a rapid Indo-Fijian population growth between 1921 through 1936, with most of this growth a result of an increase in Fiji-born Indians (Lal 1992: 74). The change in the population indicated a deep cultural, social, and alteration in the Indo-Fijian

community; it also contributed to the growing tensions between Indo-Fijians and Native Fijians (Lal 1992: 74).

Prior to the 1920's, Indo-Fijians lacked independent leadership which left them voiceless and resulted in social isolation, economic dependency, cultural disorientation, and political disorganization (Lal 1992: 74). From the beginning of colonial rule there was segregation of Europeans, Native Fijians, and Indo-Fijians (Kaplan 1998: 200). The Indo-Fijians were expected to accept their place at the bottom of the Fiji social hierarchy, with Native Fijians above them and at the top Europeans (Lal 1992: 75). However, with the population growth of Indo-Fijians in the early twentieth century things began to change. Fiji-born Indians regarded Fiji as their home, and they started to emerge from the shadows of their indentured parents and grandparents. Still regarded as Indians, which means the Hindi-speaking descendants of immigrants from India (Jayawardena 1980: 430), the Fiji-born Indians possessed the drive to better their current situation by demanding a more advanced standard of living than previously experienced by Indo-Fijians (Lal 1992: 75). The Fiji-born Indians were individually oriented and did not seek aid from the Fijian government or the British. They also were conscious and sensitive to the isolation their ancestors experienced from the larger society (Lal 1992: 75). To the new generation of Indo-Fijians (the Fiji-born Indians), Fiji was their only home and as a result they did not shy away from fighting for the rights and opportunities they thought were properly theirs (Lal 1992: 75).

As more and more Indo-Fijians asserted their demands for the same rights as other Fiji-born individuals tension grew between the Indo-Fijians and the Native Fijians. Post-indenture Indian Fijians were able to buy and farm their own lands by saving money and combining it with the earnings from earlier generations (Lal 1992: 77). They were also more actively involved in

political issues (Lal 1992: 77). By the 1950's the population of the Indo-Fijian community was growing even more. Native Fijians then proposed shutting down all permanent immigration from India as a way to control increasing political strength and in order to limit the size of the Indo-Fijian population (Lal 1992: 143). Native Fijians grew wary about Indo-Fijian progress and aspirations and were concerned about the place of their own people in the grand scale of things (Lal 1992: 145).

Fiji gained independence from Britain on October 10, 1970 (Kaplan 1998: 199; Lal 1992: 214). Then, by May 11, 1987, for the first time since independence Fiji had a new government that genuinely reflected the multiracial communities of the nation (Lal 1992: 267). "The cabinet was evenly balanced with the main portfolios dealing with Fijian affairs in Fijian hands" (Lawson 2004: 528). However, Indo-Fijians were now also represented in Fijian government (Lawson 2004: 528). The new developments were encouraging as many of the islands' inhabitants thought Fiji might live up to its reputation of a developing multiracial nation (Lal 1992: 267). However, this sense of relief did not last long. Three days later on the morning of May 14, 1987, the cabinet was in its third day of sitting. As the bell of the government buildings rang at 10 am, several hooded armed soldiers entered the parliament building and announced a military takeover (Lal 1992: 267).

The reason for the coup was that some Native Fijians felt that their national power was in jeopardy and that this was the beginning of the native majority losing their status on the island (Lal 1992: 275). The week after the coup there was much chaos and instability on the island, with riots all over the Islands. Native Fijians were at direct odds with Indo-Fijians, both on the street and in parliament. Some resorted to violence and looting against the Indo-Fijian community. The coup changed the history of Fiji. The issues of the rights and privilege of

Native Fijians in a society with large immigrant or mixed populations was raised (Lal 1992: 269). Such issues included the “tension between traditional customs and institutions and modern political ideologies, and about the use of military force to overthrow constitutionally elected governments” (Lal 1992: 269). The argument was that Native Fijians were concerned about the sacredness, preservation, and protection of their cultural heritage, since Fiji is their only homeland (Lawson 2004: 533). The Native Fijians did not want to give up their power and have their homeland changed by the Indo-Fijians. The Fiji-born Indians outlook was that they wanted to be represented, as Fiji was also their only homeland.

There were two military coups in Fiji in 1987 (Kelly 1998: 173). The first on May 14, 1987, and the second on September 25, 1987 (Lal 1992: 292). The second coup was executed by the Fijian military (Lal 1992: 292). Both coups were headed by Native Fijian, Sitiveni Rabuka the military leader of Fiji (Lal 1992: 292). However, the second coup was more professionally implemented and tightly controlled. Overseas travel for Fijian citizens was banned, a curfew was employed, and communication beyond Fiji was either cut off or under military control (Lal 1992: 292). Fiji was in another state of turmoil as Rabuka decreed himself head of an interim government (Lal 1992: 293). On September 29, 1987, after the second coup, Fiji stepped out of the British Commonwealth when it declared itself a republic (Kelly 1998: 179; Lal 1992: 293).

In hindsight, one can see that the division and feud between the Native Fijians and the Indo-Fijians as well as other immigrants was a result of a colonial rule that produced a state structure characterized by political and administrative segregation (Lawson 2004: 535). Even with independence, “issues of racial or ethnic identity infused virtually all aspects of social,

political, and economic life, and were enshrined institutionally” (Lawson 2004: 535). Therefore, the tensions only grew after independence, finally erupting in the coup.

Nowhere else in the Pacific had the ethnic division between Native islanders and immigrants been so profound (Howard 1991). The close proximity and the competition for resources and land rights between Native Fijians and immigrants led to a deep social divide on the islands that the coups exacerbated. As a result of the instability and fear for their own safety, many Indo-Fijians migrated to other parts of the world, primarily Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. As Desai and Subramanian (2003: 118) suggest, in many cases immigrants are escaping violence and unsafe circumstances, and this can be seen as the reason for the migration of many Indo-Fijian families. Canada became a favored country for migration because of its relaxed immigration laws and political and economic stability (Sharir 2002: 4).

One can see that for Indian Fijians this migration was essentially a forced migration since it was primarily a result of the military coups. Individuals participate in forced migration as a result of war, civil unrest, political or religious persecution and or military intervention (Ben-Sira 1997: 12). Although, as Ben-Sira (1997: 12) acknowledges, it is not always easy to distinguish forced migration from voluntary migration. The distinction between voluntary and forced migration is a complex one, as voluntary migration is not always voluntary or planned since individuals may decide to voluntarily flee the current situation of their country at the last minute (Ben-Sira 1997: 12). Ben-Sira (1997: 13) suggests that individuals who participate in forced migration are more prone to stress and maladjustment than voluntary migrants. In part, impact of the trauma they experienced in the homeland country makes adjustment to the host country unusually difficult (Ben-Sira 1997: 13).

Whether forced or voluntary, Desai and Subramanian (2003: 118) and Lee (2005: 3) suggest that many immigrant families share a vision of coming to a land with a vast number of opportunities. Oftentimes, immigrants imagine an idealized nation that is open and free (Lee 2005: 3; Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 19). The vision is that endless opportunities await them once off the plane and on land. The decision to migrate, then, is also based on the possibility of achieving positive goals in a new country (Ben-Sira 1997: 7). However, Jasso (1997: 69) acknowledges that oftentimes children are the fundamental reason for migration. Parents are trying to provide their children with the best possible environment (Jasso 1997: 69). Individuals who are contemplating moving to a new country calculate the costs and benefits of moving (Ben-Sira 1997: 9). In their minds the benefits of moving outweigh the costs as they believe that once they migrate their lives and the lives of their children will be made better (Ben-Sira 1997: 9; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 118).

However, the dreams immigrant individuals have about coming to Canada or America is oftentimes no sooner demolished than it is started. The vision that immigrants have of being open and free is not what is actively found (Lee 2005: 3). Individuals soon realize that there are great costs in moving to a new country. Benefits that they had in their homeland country are often times denied to them in the new host country (Ben-Sira 1997: 9). They experience difficulties such as the loss of other family members, friends, and community relations as they part from them (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 20). They lose their socio-economic status and other social roles that essentially provided them with cultural ideologies of how they fit into the world (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 20). Basically, immigrant individuals have to start from scratch in a new country. Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 20) note that immigration is stressful for the entire family. There are certain expectations by the new culture



that must be met such as learning new language (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 20). The traditions in the host country may be in contrast to those of the home country (Morrison, Guruge and Snarr 1999: 145). In addition, immigrants oftentimes find a society where race and racism structure their experiences, opportunities, and identities (Lee 2005: 3). These changes in circumstances, relationships, and roles are disorienting and unavoidably lead to a sense of loss for immigrants (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 20). Ben-Sira (1997: 11) notes “while immigration is aimed at bettering the immigrant’s well-being, it may in fact have stress-arousing consequences.”

Adaptation to a new culture is often intricate and difficult for a new immigrant. Adaptation is essentially the exchange of cultural features which occurs when immigrants come into close and continuous contact with the dominant culture. Adaptation is when ethnic minorities abide by new customs and attitudes that are acquired of the dominant culture. Cultural learning of the dominant culture is imposed on minority groups. Cultural adaptation is the first step of immigrant adjustment. Gordon (1964: 77) suggests that cultural adaptation will take place and continue on indefinitely, meaning that adaptation is a complex process that occurs in varying degrees. Zhou (1997: 71) asserts that distinctive ethnic traits that immigrant youth hold on to such as homeland cultural ways, native languages, or ethnic identities are sources of disadvantage that can hinder adaptation. Walters, Phythian, and Ansief (2007: 53) agree, and they say immigrant youths who do not speak English at home are more likely not to adapt or integrate their ethnic identity to that of their host country. I do not agree with Zhou and Walters et al. in their suggestion that adaptation to the host culture is a necessity for an immigrant youth and that if the youth does not adapt that it is disadvantageous. I contend that a young person’s choice to adapt to the host cultural norms because is not always beneficial since it oftentimes

causes conflict with the family. The pressures of adapting to the host culture that a youth is faced with favors the rejection of the homeland culture. Still, Zhou (1997: 71) highlights that even complete adaptation of the dominant host culture may not ensure all immigrants full social participation into the host society.

### Immigrant Youths, School, and Identity Formation

A review of the literature on immigrant youth in the United States and Canada indicates that these individuals share many similar experiences while adjusting to a new society. Many immigrant youths are faced with conflict, deriving from the pressures of living in a new society as well as pressures from the family and the homeland country. Keeping their life balanced becomes a challenge which results in a separation of their worlds between the private home and family life and the school and public life. These expectations are also gendered in that parents of immigrants as well as other family, friends, and teachers have different expectations depending on the gender of the youth. Tong, Huang, and McIntyre (2006) argue that immigrant youth who attempt coordinating two cultures and different languages become involved in a complex and stress-producing process. The stress primarily comes from the expectations of each culture to which the immigrant is expected to abide. Usually the expectations are not the same in each culture thus leading the immigrant to attempt to coordinate both.

Immigrant youth sometimes have different perspectives on migration than their parents. As Jasso (1997: 68) discusses, we expect children of migration to be passive receivers of the environment that they are exposed to by their parents. However, immigrant youths' vision is influenced by a number of life interactions (Walters, Phythian, and Anisef 2007: 53). The age of migration has an immense impact on a young person's identity (Sharir 2002: 15; Walters et al.

2007: 53). In other words, if the individual immigrated at a young age they are more likely to integrate themselves into the dominant culture. However, if the individual migrated at a later stage in life they clearly notice they are different, and this realization makes an impact on their lives and on their identities (Walters, Phythian, and Anisef 2007: 53).

Upon entering the United States (or Canada), for example, immigrants enter into a society where race has always been central to the national discourse on identity and individuals identify themselves primarily based on their race and racial backgrounds (Lee 2005: 3; Shahsiah 2006: 4). Lee (2005: 4-6) argues that the first message non-white immigrant youths get is about race, and non-white immigrant youths are burdened with negotiating their identities based on a racial hierarchy where they are nowhere near the top. Lee (2005: 6) also notes that there are diverse white cultures, but in the North American context, whites usually do not share privilege. This displaces a non-white immigrant youth as he or she struggles to establish him or herself within the society. In their homeland culture they knew where they stood, now, they struggle with a sense of belonging. They struggle with where they belong within this hierarchy and how and where they can establish themselves in this hierarchy.

Attending a North American school plays a large role in an immigrant child's life. These young people already face a number of pressures, both from their family and the new society in which they live in (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 118). One pressure that they experience is from their teachers. Lee (2005: 28-30) expresses that educators place immense pressures on immigrant youth. Teachers label students with titles like "good" or "talented" student. Teachers see the students who are "good" as the students who are enrolled in more difficult classes and have a pro-school attitude (Lee 2005: 28-29). Teachers describe "good" students as ones who do not challenge the school culture, structure, and who are friendly with other staff members (Lee

2005: 29). Teachers also note that “good” students express their opinions and are not afraid to challenge the teacher’s ideas (Lee 2005: 29). Not only do these labels create pressure for the “good” students, as they try to remain “good” but also to those who are not characterized in the same manner (Lee 2005: 28). Those individuals who are not characterized as “good” students are usually cast aside by their teachers because they are not on par with other students in the class (Lee 2005: 28). Lee (2005: 28-31) notes that these labels reveal a bias towards white students and that immigrant students are rarely put in the “good” student category. Immigrant youths may not feel comfortable speaking up in class because of language barriers. They also may not know the norms of the school culture which may be different from that of their homeland school. Teachers are not always sensitive to these challenges and often view immigrant students as lazy, less intelligent, and more susceptible to getting into trouble (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001:127).

Language, especially, poses particular problems for immigrant youths. Often immigrant youths are not familiar or fluent with the dominant language of the host nation. It is difficult to learn a new language especially for people who have to learn a language that is linguistically distant from their mother tongue (Van Tubergen 2006: 140). Van Tubergen (2006: 146) acknowledges that the acquisition of a second language is a dynamic process. “Immigrant groups enter their destination with a certain amount of skills in the second language, they gradually learn the language, and they ultimately reach a certain level of proficiency (van Tubergen 2006:147). Lee (2005: 28) and Suares-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 17) suggest that English is often a second language for immigrant youth, and while in school these individuals are usually directed to English as a second language (ESL) classes. Teachers see ESL classes as easy and believe that English is easily learnt (Lee 2005:28). Hence, there is a stigma that surrounds

the ESL programs that is projected onto the students (Lee 2005: 28-30). Immigrant youths consequently are outcasts from the mainstream, “good” student education programs by their own educators (Lee 2005: 28-30; Suarez- Orozco and Todorova 2003: 17). Individuals enrolled in the ESL classes are usually placed in the “bad” student category, meaning that teachers think they are not smart students because they are not enrolled in difficult classes.

On the other hand, another aspect of schooling that puts pressure on immigrant children is being pulled out of ESL or other bilingual programs before they are ready to be mainstreamed to regular classrooms (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 17). Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 17) argue that this tends to happen because educators do not understand the needs of the immigrant child.

The school setting and interactions with school peers are where immigrant youths first experience being different (Shahsiah 2006: 22). Immigrant youths are self-conscious around individuals their age, and they do not want to be solely judged by their external appearance (Shahsiah 2006: 22). In addition, their self-image may be in contrast to how others perceive them (Shahsiah 2006: 22). In other words, how they view themselves may not be how others view them. These individuals want their choices and the way they act to be considered in determining their external ethnic identities (Phinney and Rotheram 1987: 153). Shahsiah (2006: 22) argues that school is one place where individuals make a distinction between “us” and “them.” For immigrant youths “us” usually signifies only immigrants and “them” the dominant society. Immigrants make this distinction because they hold a kind of differentiated sense of self-consciousness, meaning they feel the need to use these as terms of separation (Shahsiah 2006: 22). However, these categorizations are often contextual as sometimes “us” signifies all

Canadians or immigrants (Shahsiah 2006: 22). Still, there is a distinction between the act of self-identifying and the imposition of an identity even if the terminology wavers (Shahsiah 2006: 22).

Desai and Subramanian (2003: 140), studying Canadian immigrants, discuss that girls have different challenges in fitting in at school than do boys. Girls face challenges of being accepted by their own cultural group as well as the dominant white group whereas boys show that they come together regardless of their inherent diversity (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 140). In other words, girls are trying to be accepted at school by their own cultural group but also by their non-immigrant peers. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 140-141) suggest that immigrant females who have been in Canada longer strive extremely hard to fit in with peers that are not from their own cultural group. These girls fear that if they support new immigrants coming into their group that they may be shunned by their current non-immigrant group. Because of this fear girls oftentimes are not willing to fraternize with other immigrants. In consequence, these girls might be seen by their own immigrant peers as acquiring some kind of pseudo-white status (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 141). However, Desai and Subramanian (2003: 141) continue that this could change depending on the context. For example, if the immigrant youth attends a more multicultural school, then the youth who has been in the host country longer may become a mentor for a newcomer to the school. In other words, if the youth is comfortable with their school dynamics and already accepted by peers, then it is more likely for an immigrant female who has been in the host country and the school longer to reach out and help the new comer.

Berry et al. (2006: 325) also argue that adaptation to a new culture is gendered and that immigrant girls have a more difficult time adapting than immigrant boys. They suggest that there are two distinct forms of adaptation for young people, psychological adaptation and socio-

cultural adaptation (Berry et al. 2006: 325). Defined, psychological adaptation is the degree to which an individual is satisfied with their life and their self-esteem (Berry et al. 2006: 311). Socio-cultural adaptation is how an individual adjusts to school, how they feel about going to school (Berry et al 2006: 312). According to Berry et al. (2006: 325) female youths have poor psychological adaptation, meaning that they are generally unhappy with life satisfaction, have low self-esteem, and have psychological problems. Females display more symptoms of psychological distress in terms of depression and anxiety (Berry et al. 2006: 325). However, Berry et al. (2006: 325) suggest that female immigrant youths have better socio-cultural adaptation, meaning that they adjust better to school in terms of academics and they do not worry about going to school whereas their male counterparts do not adjust as well.

How one self identifies is important among immigrant youths, especially girls. Lee (2005) argues that there are two general outcomes when young females attend school. They are confronted with the choice of whether to adapt to their host culture or to remain faithful to their homeland culture (Lee 2005: 50). Lee (2005: 50) notes that this decision is reflected in all aspects of their school life. Traditional immigrant youths are defined as having preserved their cultures, and non-traditional immigrant youth are defined as individuals who have lost their culture (Lee 2005: 50). Lee (2005: 50) presents that educators view the immigrant youths who adapt, on the non-traditional youths as being the best outcome, whereas the parents view their children who remain traditional as a positive outcome. Parents want their daughters to remain traditional because their daughters are expected to uphold family values. Parents want their daughters to remain traditional because they consider those individuals to be respectful and obey their parents, and it will keep them out of trouble (Lee 2005: 51). In the study by Lee (2005: 52), traditional young women accept their parents' authority and they abide by their parents'

educational aspirations (Lee 2005: 52-60). Therefore, traditional female immigrant youths are often regarded by their ESL teacher's as girls who need help and support in negotiating their host nations (North America's) gendered norms, although these females follow school rules and embrace education.

Lee (2005: 63) contends that traditional girls follow parental rules and expectations and they follow their parents' lead in only selectively adapting to the host country's cultural norms. Traditional girls, however, face the additional stress of dealing with the dominant culture's characterization of their homeland culture as backward and problematic (Lee 2005: 64).

Immigrant youths who are categorized as non- traditional have different experiences growing up and attending school in their host culture. These young people attempt to distance themselves from the foreigner image (Lee 2005: 65). They recognize the process of adaptation as requiring and achieving social distance from their traditional culture (Lee 2005: 65). For example, non- traditional immigrant females, according to Lee (2005: 65), alter their dress code to that of mainstream society. They wear make-up and color their hair, and even sometimes wear colored contact lenses to appear white in their appearance (Lee 2005: 103). Non-traditional girls also believe that it is their decision and only theirs when it comes to selecting a partner for marriage (Lee 2005: 103). Still, Lee (2005: 103) notes that within the group of non-traditional girls that she studied, there was a split. One subset only changed their appearances; they still obeyed their parents, performed household chores, and took care of their younger siblings (Lee 2005: 103). This group still followed their parents' expectations and took their education seriously, but only occasionally questioned notions of their homeland culture (Lee 2005: 103). The second group within the non-traditional immigrant female group is the "over-non-traditional" (Lee 2005: 103). These girls not only changed their physical appearance but also



resisted their parents and their authority as well as their homeland cultural gender norms (Lee 2005:107). Lee (2005: 107) argues that these individuals want gender equality and want to be treated with the same respect as their brothers, who in their homeland cultures are typically entitled to a lot more freedom because of their gender.

### Immigrant Youths at Home

Family ties are an important source of support and often control for immigrant youth (Zhou 1997: 82). Zhou (1997: 83) argues that migration presents a clash between two social worlds, especially for youths. At school the adolescent feels foreign and at home they are seen as too (North) American (Berrol 1995: 85). In consequence, “the strange dualism into which they had been born or moved caused much unhappiness” (Berrol 1995: 85). Zhou (1997: 83) and Berrol (1995: 85) stress that often immigrant children quickly become non-traditional as they adapt to North American norms their parents cannot keep up with. This produces a fear in parents that their children will become too non-traditional and not abide by their homeland cultural norms (Zhou 1997: 83). The relationship between parents and children becomes stressful because parents want children to retain the homeland culture and traditions and their children are trying to understand the mainstream culture (Berrol 1995: 85).

Zhou (1997: 83), however, argues that this tension is not due to the adaptation process but to the migration process. The migration process disturbs the normal parent and child relationship in a number of ways as the family has to learn how to adapt to one another in a new situation and environment (Zhou 1997: 84). In the homeland, for example, mothers may have not worked outside of the home, but given their current situation and how two incomes may be a necessity for immigrant families, women of the house will at times work to bring in extra income

(Zhou 1997: 83). Zhou (1997: 83) argues that this creates some difficulties in child-rearing as the child has more opportunities for exposure to the host culture. However, work gives women some measures of independence and, hence, weakens the status and authority of men, particularly fathers (Zhou 1997: 83). In addition, having two working parents limits one-on-one interaction between the parents and the children (Zhou 1997: 83). Lee (2005: 62) and Zhou (1997: 83) also suggest that because children usually play the role of translator for their parents, it creates a role reversal, making the parents dependent on the child, leading to a further loss of parental authority. In addition, parents are concerned with making the best of the situation that they are in while retaining the traditional family life. The children on the other-hand, oftentimes see traditional ways as embarrassing and as the “old” way (Zhou 1997: 84). Desai and Subramanian (2003: 147) also suggest that parents are concerned with their children becoming non-traditional because they fear that they will be abandoned by their children and later in life will be put into institutionalized care facilities, which they view as a North American way of life.

Immigrant children also accuse their parents of not understanding the tensions they face as young people (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 142). And some studies have shown conflicts between parents and children occur more frequently among female children (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145). According to Desai and Subramanian (2003: 145- 146), in immigrant traditions (mainly in South Asians), females are seen as the custodians of family values, thus parents are more concerned about their daughters remaining traditional and abiding by traditional values and customs than their sons. On the other hand, parents are usually more accepting of a boy's adaptation to the host culture than their female children. Female children encounter problems with their parents because they realize that this is a double standard and they understand that not all cultures, especially their North American culture, abide by the same

cultural notions (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145-147). Desai and Subramanian (2003: 146) argue that immigrant parents are essentially reacting to threats of cultural eradication, thus they become more controlling and impose increasing demands especially on their female children.

Orellana (2009: 53) and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003) suggest that even when activities are not overtly gendered, they may become gendered because of the nature of the strong gender component in family relationships. Orellana (2009: 53) suggests that as children move through adolescence, the gendered nature of family relationships impose different constraints on girls' and boys' movements and activities outside of the home (Orellana 2009: 53). Females in an immigrant household play many roles, from that of the translator, to child caretaker, and household caretaker (Lee 2005: 101; Orellana 2009: 53; Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 33-34). Orellana (2009: 53) argues that gendered expectations are partly shaped because of greater expectations by parents for their daughter than for sons to do household chores and the fact that girls' are more willing to do household chores. In addition, Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 34) note that in a household of two working parents, the parents rely heavily on their eldest daughter for childcare of their younger siblings. Lee (2005: 63) suggests that immigrant female youths feel obligated to do such chores and understand themselves to be helping out the entire family by doing so. Many times female children see their mother's role in the family and the hard work that she does, thus the child performs the household chores in order to ease some of her mother's burdens (Lee 2005: 96- 108). The young girls also feel obligated to their parents for the many sacrifices they have made for them (Lee 2005: 96). Still, Lee (2005: 88) highlights that many immigrant females are discontent when it comes to gendered expectations.

In their study of South Asian immigrant youth in Toronto, Desai and Subramanian (2003: 146) note that immigrant parents are more concerned about their daughters well being than their sons. Parents are reluctant to let their daughters go out alone, even to a school setting. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 145) argue that these females are under much pressure because not only do they have to be accepted by their peers at school but they also are under pressure to adopt an opposite set of behaviors that is accepted by their parents.

In addition, parents are under pressure as they are being judged by others within their community. Parents are seen as good parents by other immigrant community members only if their daughters are doing well academically or professionally and if their daughters have retained traditional values. This includes the daughter's physical appearance, the way she dresses, speaking the language of the homeland, having knowledge of their religion, and marrying the boy of the parents' choosing (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 144).

Desai and Subramanian (2003: 144) argue that it is vital to understand the gap that exists between mainstream socio-cultural values in relation to power as experienced by immigrant parents and their realities in Canada. According to Desai and Subramanian (2003: 144) immigrant parents are bombarded with external forces of dominance and continually have to legitimize their values. Parents are basically reacting to the host nation's structures of dominance (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 144). Parents become strict on their daughters because norms of the mainstream culture are not accepted in the parents' homeland cultural values. The immigrant youth, then, must negotiate and create a new reality that is inclusive of both (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 144). Adolescent females negotiate aspects of their homeland culture but still feel the need to take part in the host county's cultural norms. Youths

are reacting to the dominance enforced by their parents as well as societal structures of dominance (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 144).

In many immigrant cultures dating is not accepted by the parents because “dating” does not exist in the culture that the parents come from (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145). For example, in their study of Tamil migrants to Toronto, Canada, Morrison, Guruge and Snarr (1999: 148) acknowledge that for adolescent females dating was absent until their exposure to Canadian norms of dating and going out. However, since coming to Canada dating was a significant occurrence for these young women (Morrison, Guruge and Snarr 1999: 148). Desai and Subramanian (2003: 145) argue that parents do not support the idea of their daughters dating because it symbolizes an erosion of cultural values. They deem it as an act of wildness supported by North American culture. In many cases, immigrant parents support arranged marriages for their children. But immigrant children attending school in Canada are exposed to love marriages, thus parents fear that their children might not only select their own mates but also might choose someone from a different ethno-cultural, racial, or religious background (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145-146). They fear that if their children find a mate that does not come from their homeland that their cultural norms, values, and expectations will not be passed down to the next generation. The fear once again for parents is that their children will lose their ethno-cultural identity because they are constantly exposed to the norms and expectations of the host culture (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 146).

The study done by Desai and Subramanian on South Asian immigrant youths in Toronto is important because they focus and address many of the same questions and issues that surround Indo-Fijian immigrant youth in Vancouver. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 148) note that there is also a divide between parents and how they deal with their daughters. According to Desai and

Subramanian (2003: 148), mothers are more understanding, they are the emotional support, the mediator, and the buffer between the children and the father. Mothers are often the people with whom the immigrant youth feel closer because they are able to discuss certain problems with them. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 148) note that although immigrant mothers usually work outside the home, they are still in charge of the child's upbringing. If the child is rebellious, according to homeland cultural norms, it is often the mother who is blamed. Even so, children often refer to their fathers as more strict than their mothers (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 148). Mothers also play the role of secret keepers for the immigrant youth, especially when it comes to friends of the opposite sex. Mothers do not promote dating but are aware of it and they usually do not tell fathers if dating occurs (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 148).

Immigrant youths vary on a number of dimensions: in their origins, where they come from, how long they have been in North America, the nature of the community in which they currently reside, and the degree of contact they have with their home country (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 28). These rudiments matter in how parents raise their children in North America (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 28). Immigrant children have many family obligations because their aid is necessary for the success of their entire family trying to adjust to new societal demands.

For example, immigrant children often play the role of translator for their parents and other younger siblings (Orellana 2009: 10-11; Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003:35). The designated translator is usually one of the oldest children in the household (Orellana 2009: 52). Orellana (2009: 54) suggests that the eldest children of immigrants translate for a vast number of family members, including their parents, grandparents, younger siblings, older siblings, friends and other family members. That is because the cognitive, linguistic, and literate capability of the

eldest child is usually more advanced than that of younger siblings (Orellana 2009: 52). Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 36) note that translating involves sophisticated bilingual skills, as the individual is expected to translate many genres, from the printed word, to movies, to other real world activities. However, individuals feel differently about translating at different times for their family members and friends (Orellana 2009: 13,52,54). For example, a youth feels annoyed when a request to translate interrupts an activity or when they have to break their own concentration to explain what is happening to others, such as when watching a television program or movie (Orellana 2009: 13).

Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 36) note that parents view their children translating as developing good academic skills leading to academic success. “Translating involves sophisticated bilingual capacities, literacy skills (as children translate many genres of the printed word from a variety of real-world domains), and real-world math abilities (as kids help with everyday math practices such as paying bills, writing checks, opening bank accounts, and making purchases” (Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 36). Some children like to help figure out situations for their parents, and they feel a sense of accomplishment when they do so. Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 35) add that according to immigrant mothers, a proper daughter should want to help the mother in household chores and any other way that she can, this includes being a translator.

Orellana (2009: 54) also suggests that places and types of translating has a gendered dimension, as girls more often translate for their parents, grandparents, and younger siblings at the doctors’ and dentists’ appointments. Girls are more likely to translate conversations to their parents rather than printed documents (Orellana 2009: 54). However, more often than not immigrant youths feel that their contribution as a translator is just normal, that it is not a big deal

and that they are happy to help (Orellana 2009: 62). Translation is an important activity for both parents and children as it assures parents that their child is learning something in school and this also assures the child that they are also understanding the language that they are learning (Orellana 2009: 63).

Parents of immigrant children understand that one of the main benefits in coming to North America is the educational opportunities available for their children (Abada, Hou and Ram 2009: 5; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 118; Dyson 2005: 51; Lee 2005: 101; Rumbaut 1997:36). Dyson (2005: 51) notes that parents realize the academic payoffs for their children, and many parents have aspirations for their children to earn advanced degrees. In fact, this may be a reason to migrate. In turn, the notion is often instilled in the child that it is important to succeed in academics. Parents of immigrants acknowledge that education is essential for a better life (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001: 124). They realize that completing high school and going beyond high school is critical (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001: 124). “Formal schooling has become a high-stakes goal for the children of immigrants. For many of them, schooling is nearly the only ticket for a better tomorrow” (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001: 124).

Present adolescent educational achievements and aspirations offer significant indications of future school-to-work transitions as an adult (Rumbaut 1997:36). As Ogbu (1987) notes, immigrants possess this frame of comparing their opportunities and situations in their host country with those in their homeland country and they often conclude that life is in fact better in the host country because of better educational opportunities. Children, therefore, equate their parents’ educational aspirations with parental satisfaction and tend to share their parents’ high academic expectations (Dyson 2005: 51; Abada, Hou, and Ram 2009: 3).



Immigrant youth for whom English is a second language have a higher tendency to attend university, but this varies depending on ethnicity and the number of years since immigration (Abada et al. 2009: 3). Abada et al. (2009: 3) argue that recently arrived immigrants endure a disadvantage in school performance, whereas individuals who have resided in their host country longer are associated with better school performance. This highlights that those individuals who arrived in early childhood have the same educational result as those who were born in Canada. Abada et al. (2009: 3) suggests that the immigrant children that arrive in early childhood may in fact be considered to have higher acculturation rates and higher educational outcomes than those immigrants that arrive later. This results because the child has been in school for a longer period than the newly arrived individual so he or she has an advantage because they are brought up with the language (English) and have more exposure to it at school (Abada et al. 2009: 3; Dyson 2005: 51).

Immigrant children sometimes regard their parents' behavior as controlling (Chao and Aque 2009: 343). In many immigrant societies control and discipline are important parental responsibilities, however, the North American standard views excessive parental control and discipline as an intrusion (Chao and Aque 2009: 343). Chao and Aque (2009: 343) argue that depending on the time of migration, immigrant youth may interpret parental control in different ways. Immigrant youth who recently migrated are more accepting of parental authority. Control problems arise when migration happens early on and the immigrant youth has had time to adapt to North American norms, especially at school (Chao and Aque 2009: 344; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 138).

### Immigrant Youths and Nationality

Immigrant youths also have a difficult time with their personal identity. They have trouble with accepting the dominant culture's terms for who they are. Terms such as "visible minority" and "people of color" are not ones with which many immigrant children are comfortable (Shahsiah 2006: 25). Shahsiah (2006: 25) suggests that although immigrant youths acknowledge that they may be classified as a "visible minority" or "person of color" they would not willingly describe themselves according to these terms. They only do so on standardized forms like job applications or other questionnaires (Shahsiah 2006: 26). However, Desai and Subramanian (2003: 138) suggest that immigrant youths encounter racism based on their skin color which automatically places them in categories of visible minority, racial minority, or person of color. Shahsiah (2006: 26) argues that the immigrant youth who oppose these terms do so because they feel that the words suggest images of them as being inferior and helpless. In the Canadian context, immigrant individuals do not feel few in numbers, thus they do not feel the need to distinguish themselves in such terms (Shahsiah 2006: 26). In other words, immigrant youths feel that there are others around them that share their ethnicity, backgrounds, and skin color and that they are not few and far between; therefore, they feel that these labels are irrelevant. Nevertheless, it is sufficiently convenient for the host country, Canada, to put labels on such individuals, thus "visible minority" and "people of color" are terms used to describe these youths.

Immigrant youths often have difficulties in expressing who they are, in terms of nationality (Shahsiah 2006: 23). In the study by Shahsiah, when asked the question of where they were from, the individual became frustrated because "being asked to self-identify by

strangers in effect was a question of self categorization and being forced into a box” (Shahsiah 2006: 23). Shahsiah (2006: 23) argues that immigrant youths consider themselves citizens of the host country, in this case Canada, and that they also define themselves as Canadians. However, they will not openly call themselves Canadians (Shahsiah 2006: 23-24). Even though they think of themselves as Canadians, they are not convinced that they could call themselves Canadian when asked (Shahsiah 2006: 23-24). Shahsiah (2006: 24) explains that the immigrant youth feels uncertainty when being asked such a question of identity. They conceptualize being Canadian as a privilege, a privilege given to those that were born in Canada (Shahsiah 2006: 23). According to Shahsiah (2006: 24) immigrant youths find it difficult to overtly call themselves Canadian because calling themselves Canadian implies a sense of belonging, and, although they do consider themselves Canadian, most do not feel that they have the right to call themselves Canadian. This right they feel is only entitled to those who were born in Canada

Shahsiah (2006: 24) highlights that some youths only identify themselves as Canadian if it is to their advantage. A number of them explained that they would call themselves Canadian if they were traveling abroad, or they would hyphenate their identity (Shahsiah 2006: 24). Those that did not hyphenate to reflect their ethnic background and Canadian nationality explained that being Canadian is a given, thus, it does not require being emphasized when identifying themselves (Shahsiah 2006: 24). When asked, they would not reveal that they were Canadian, rather they only exposed their ethnic identity. Shahsiah (2006: 24) also argues that there is another notion of immigrants being Canadian, that of the essence of Canadian-ness. Canadian-ness means that immigrants adhere to what they consider notions of being a Canadian. In other words, being Canadian is actually a subjective identity, and immigrants feel that this is open to interpretation. Shahsiah (2006: 28-30) argues that there is a distinction between becoming

Canadian and being Canadian. This reverts back to being born in Canada. Immigrant youth regard one who is born in Canada as being Canadian and one who is not born in Canada but accepts Canadian norms as one who is becoming Canadian. Many immigrant individuals admit that they are Canadian but do not agree that they are “Canadian-Canadian” (Shahsiah 2006: 28). These individuals disclose that being Canadian-Canadian refers to one that has been born in Canada (Shahsiah 2006: 30). Being Canadian can be described in inclusive ways, through detached notions of loyalty, legality, citizenship status, ancestry, ethnicity, or place of birth (Shahsiah 2006: 29). To become Canadian is different from being Canadian. To become Canadian is only possible when an individual is accepting of and accepted by the dominant culture and society (Shahsiah 2006: 30).

While some individuals think of their Canadian identity as a burden, others try to embrace the given label. In school, immigrant individuals acknowledge what the norms and expectations of North American society are. With this acknowledgement immigrant children want nothing more than to just be one of “them” (Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder 2006: 312-326; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 139-141; Dyson 2005: 50; Lee 2005: 53,65; Tancredo 2004: 5-6; Walters, Phythian and Anisef 2007: 53).

### The Hybrid and The New Hybrid

Youths are faced with balancing two worlds, they are in a sense trapped between two cultures--that of their parents culture (the homeland culture) and that of the host country’s culture. Although parents want their children to incorporate themselves in school, they only condone selective incorporation, thus they monitor and control school activities and friendships (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 144). According to Desai and Subramanian (2003: 144) parents

control external influence by encouraging their children to have friendships with individuals from their own immigrant community.

The pressure to please both their parents and peers results in the individual leading dual lives (Berrol 1995: 85; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145). I will term these as the public and private lives of the immigrant youth. The public life is their school and peer interactions and the private life is their interactions within the family and within the home. The female immigrant attempts to keep these two lives separate as they feel the integration of the two lives would never work (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145). Scholars of immigration content that in time the immigrant will eventually blend the two cultures of which they are a part of, producing what they have termed a “hybrid” person (Asher 2008: 15; Brettell and Nibbs 2009: 680; Kapcha and Strong 1999: 240; Stross 1999: 254).

Hybridity is not a new concept for Indo-Fijians as they have for generations spoken a hybrid language. The hybrid language, a pidgin of Hindi, is known by Indo-Fijians as Fijian Hindi (Kapcha and Strong 1999: 240). However, for the current generation of Fijian immigrant youths the notion of cultural hybridity is new. Within their family they are the first generation of immigrant youth in Canada, thus they have to negotiate and maneuver their current position. Because female immigrant youths have different expectations from their homeland culture and their host culture they develop a capability to intermix the two. They reveal one aspect of culture when it is deemed necessary and hide or do not expose the other. As Desai and Subramanian (2003: 145) point out, girls change their physical appearance from private to public sphere. These girls possess the quality to transform into what each culture expects from them, thus they are a hybrid of both their homeland culture and their host culture. Desai and Subramanian

(2003: 144) note that this hybridity puts a lot of strain on the young girls as they try to find a balance for themselves in society and their current situation.

However, a true cultural hybrid person is one who embodies and blends the expectations and qualities of two different cultures and traditions (Stross 1999: 254). If research on immigrant youths suggests that the individuals separate their two worlds from one another then we cannot conclude that the individuals are true hybrids of the cultures they are involved with. Because this notion of cultural hybridity is complex we cannot simply conclude that immigrant youths are either one of two things; a hybrid of their cultures or not a hybrid. This is where I propose that immigrant youth maybe a “New Hybrid.” I define a new hybrid as one who abides by the rules and expectations of the two or more cultures that they belong to. However, a new hybrid does not do this voluntarily. Rather, she abides by cultural norms to appease others who are part of the cultures to which she belongs. By recognizing one as a new hybrid we may be better equipped to understand the experiences of immigrant youths growing up in Canada, their personal identities, and their current positions in society.

#### Auto-Ethnography/ Native Ethnography

Auto-ethnography is a type of autobiographical personal narrative in which one examines one’s own life in order to depict a way of life; it connects the personal world with one’s cultural world (Denshire 2006: 346). Auto-ethnography can range from “the ethnography of one’s own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest” (Reed- Danahay 1997: 2). Auto- ethnography as a method refers to a form of self- narrative that places the self within a social context and asks an individual to think ethnographically about the discipline and the research they conduct (Young and Meneley 2005: 1; Reed- Danahay 1997: 9).

Auto-ethnography is an innovative genre of anthropological writing which allows the anthropologist to step back and examine their research as it places the anthropologist within the research they conduct. It allows for reflexivity (Langness and Frank 1981: 97; Young and Meneley 2005: 2). With the post-modern critique the objective observer position of standard ethnography was questioned. Auto-ethnography arose as an answer to those critiques and generated “a renewed interest in personal narrative, in life history, and in autobiography among anthropologists” (Reed- Danahay 1997: 1-2).

Auto-ethnography as a term can have multiple meanings (Reed- Danahay 1997: 4). However, for the purposes of my research the term auto-ethnography is a method in an anthropological study of a set of issues relating of the anthropologist’s people and culture (Reed- Danahay 1997: 4-5). The insider status is what marks the auto-ethnography, in that any research that is not conducted within the anthropologist’s own culture, people, and society is excluded from the category (Reed- Danahay 1997: 5). With that said, a researcher does not necessarily have to be native to the culture in question; they may also acquire the insider status through socialization or intimate relations with the group (Reed- Danahay 1997: 5). The fundamental criteria that a researcher must possess is internal attachment and membership that can lead to permanent self-identification within a group that is recognized by both parties, themselves and the people of whom they are a part (Reed- Danahay 1997: 5). It is argued that reflecting on one’s own experiences allows the anthropologist to gain significant insights into the disposition of the social setting that they are researching (Hume and Mulcock 2004: xii). Being a native or insider anthropologist makes it difficult to separate one’s private life from ethnographic work, thus it presents a dimension of personal expression and reflexivity (Colic-Peisker 2004: 83). Often this reflexivity becomes a fundamental part of the research one does as an insider (Colic-

Peisker 2004: 83). Therefore, the researcher does not adopt the objective outsider approach of writing (Reed- Danahay 1997: 6).

Auto-ethnography is also referred to as “life writing” as it tells about a culture while simultaneously telling about a life where the anthropologist is the autobiographical subject (Reed- Danahay 1997: 6). Therefore, it is writing about a culture while learning about the self (Coffey 1999: 116). Auto-ethnography, then, combines both ethnography and autobiography (Reed- Danahay 1997: 6). In this approach auto-ethnography requires the integration of one’s own life experience (the researcher) with the experiences of other individuals in the ethnography (the researcher’s informants) (Reed- Danahay 1997: 6). As a method of autobiography, auto-ethnography oftentimes includes confessional stories (Coffey 1999: 116). “The confessional has been coined as a mode of ethnographic representation that emphasizes the writing of the self into the process of research” (Coffey 1999” 116).

Reed-Danahay (1997: 2) argues that an auto-ethnographer in anthropology is one who crosses boundaries that may not have been done in the past. This is possible because more individuals have become ethnographers of their own culture and telling their own stories (Reed-Danahay 1997: 3). By using the insider approach the researcher is able to understand the informants because they share similar backgrounds. Auto-ethnographers encompass multiple and shifting identities (Reed- Danahay 1997: 3). In studying one’s own culture the limitations are perhaps scarce whereas by studying a culture that is not defined as one’s own the limitations may be vast because of the hurdles they must cross to gain the insider position (Reed- Danahay 1997: 3). Therefore, the auto-ethnographer is able to maneuver each situation during research and express their identity in the most acceptable manner since not only is he/she the researcher but also the informant, and a community member of the culture that he/she is studying. The



concept of auto-ethnography is centered on the multiple nature of the self and it presents new ways of writing about social life (Reed- Danahay 1997: 3).

Reed- Danahay (1997:2) and Young and Meneley (2005: 3) discuss that auto-ethnography is inclined to different genres of writing. One genre that I will be focusing on is the history of ethnographers who have worked in their own societies at home which results in what Reed- Danahay (1997: 2) and Young and Meneley (2005: 3) recognize as “native anthropology.” Another genre that I will be concentrating on is autobiographical reflexivity (Reed- Danahay 1997: 1; Young and Meneley 2005: 3). Young and Meneley (2005: 3) highlight that this type of anthropological writing arose in the 1980s and 1990s as an answer to the critiques of ethnographic objectivity (Langness and Frank 1981: 97). Another genre that I will be focusing on is what Reed- Danahay (1997: 2) recognize as ethnic autobiography, which entails personal narratives that are written by members of ethnic minority groups. According to Reed-Danahay (1997: 2), this genre is characterized by the anthropologist addressing personal experience in ethnographic writing known as autobiographical ethnography. Since I recognize myself as a native ethnographer, I will be addressing the aforementioned genres in terms of how my personal experience has influenced my research. Working in what I call my home and my own society has provided me with insider knowledge as I reflect on my experiences growing up. It also brings in biases. I concur with Reed-Danahay (1997: 2) as she expresses “Anthropologists are increasingly explicit in their exploration of links between their own autobiographies and their ethnographic practices.” It is an outlet for the anthropologist to tell their own story of their life history.

In recent years there has been a move made by some anthropologists to focus their fieldwork on what they consider their home (Jacobs-Huey 2002: 792; Messerschmidt 1981: 197;

Motzafi- Haller 2004: 196). Messerschmidt (1981: 197) suggests that ethnographic research done in one's home and own society may be essential for anthropology because the native ethnographer is able to gain a fuller understanding by benefitting from belonging to the group they study (Young and Meneley 2005: 5). This is possible because the native ethnographer is aware of the internal workings and specific cultural nuances of their own culture. This is important because the native ethnographer is aware of such things and is able to draw meaning out, whereas an outsider may not understand the full cultural context behind certain actions. Anthropologists who conduct research at home may be accustomed to cultural nuances and they are able to draw on experiential understandings (Moffatt 1992: 206). They have the capability to blend in either verbally, physically, or behaviorally (Moffatt 1992: 206). The opportunity of conducting research at home is plenty, and it presents infinite research settings as well as methodological problems. Still, it can also lead to creativeness and innovativeness (Messerschmidt 1981: 198). Native ethnographers have brought satisfaction and a sense of belonging by studying what they consider their own community, culture, and society (Colic-Peisker 2004: 83). As is now clear in anthropology, it is difficult to separate one's private life from ethnographic fieldwork, and native ethnography provides a way to embrace this notion rather than trying to separate it.

One benefit from conducting research at home is that it encourages reflexivity. Anthropologists now recognize that what separates them from the individuals that they study is not an elemental identity, but their own intellectual preoccupations (Young and Meneley 2005: 7). Auto-ethnography allows the researcher to position oneself within the text as well as to engage in critical reflection on the relationships that are created when conducting ethnographic research (Young and Meneley 2005: 7). Auto-ethnography allows the researcher to place their

position within the research they conduct. It creates the ability to reflect on how their position and biases has influenced their ethnographic research. “The reflexive ethnographer becomes the guiding presence in the ethnographic text” (Denzin 2003: 259).

Colic-Peisker (2004: 83) and Jacobs- Huey (2002: 792) contend that although native ethnography is important in anthropology because it allows the insider status, there are also some drawbacks to the method. Even as an insider it may be difficult to obtain information from individuals you call your own people (Young and Meneley 2005: 5). Even as an insider the researcher may have obtained an outsider status unconsciously. This is possible if the researcher does not have the right approach when researching (Young and Meneley 2005: 5). A researcher must keep in mind that even as an insider they may be an outsider because of their educational achievements, and the researcher must be able to adjust their behavior to fit into particular social standards that make sense to the informants (Young and Meneley 2005: 6). “What one must also know is whether or not investigator/investigated are equally at home, as it were, with the kinds of premises about social life which inform anthropological inquiry” (Strathern 1987: 16).

However, the fundamental challenge of being a native ethnographer is not being able to gain sufficient distance from the research (Abu-Lughod 1991: 141). In other words, there is a constant battle of comparing and sharing your own experiences with the individuals you study, thus your voice is mixed in with their voices (Colic- Peisker 2004: 83). Jacobs- Huey (2002: 792) and Motzafi- Haller (2004: 197-201) note that native anthropologists constantly have to negotiate their identity and legitimacy within their research. When writing and researching one’s own culture and society it is difficult to remain detached and rational (Motzafi- Haller 2004: 201). Motzalfi- Haller (2004: 216-217) writes that there is always a connection between a researcher’s position in society and history and the kind of research agenda that they have.

Auto-ethnography as a method has become essential for some anthropologists because it allows the researcher to place wider cultural emphases on self-revelation and confession (Coffey 1999: 117). Acknowledging oneself into the ethnographic process allows for a realistic account of specific intentions behind the research and its process. By placing one's self within the research it can be seen as a means for establishing authenticity (Coffey 1999: 117). Denzin (2003: 259) contends that auto-ethnography is the future of ethnography, and that in the future the division of the two disappears as it becomes necessary for a researcher to place themselves within the research they conduct. Denzin (2003: 262) argues that auto-ethnography endorses a theory of selfhood and being, that it creates a notion of moral agency. Denzin (2003: 259) argues that it is the researcher's responsibility to make their voices heard and that this must be done for future generations as well, and when the internal voice is heard the result is critical auto-ethnographers. I consider myself a native ethnographer and use the method of auto-ethnography in this study.

### III: METHODOLOGY

In this study I present myself as the native ethnographer, a hybrid of sorts. This notion is not that I am a split subject, but rather a hybrid as I combine the subject and object distinction (Weston 1997: 168). As Weston (1997: 168) states “the Native Ethnographer is a particular sort of hybrid, it is the act of studying a ‘people’ defined as one’s own.” I consider myself as a native ethnographer because I myself am a female Fijian immigrant who grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and I am studying individuals who share the same background of being an immigrant from Fiji and growing up in Vancouver. Studying people that are like oneself provides a beneficial angle through a deepening of the familiar rather than a discovery of the other (Chawla 2006: 2). My position within this group is personal as at times I alternate between my position as the ethnographer and my position as a Fijian immigrant. However, these two positions cannot be fully separated, rather I embrace this notion of the native ethnographer – the hybrid.

I recognize that by being a native ethnographer I inherently have biases since my outlook on this subject is informed by personal and emotional ties to the research because I am a part of this culture and because I have a connection with Fijian female immigrants. Even so, some of these biases can also lead to insights that the non-native anthropologist will not have. In addition, as a native ethnographer I possess an understanding of Fijian cultural norms and expectations, therefore, I may have insights through my own personal understanding. Another advantage of being a native ethnographer is approaching my study with an insider status because the people of that community consider me one of them since I share the same social and cultural background. Another benefit of being a native ethnographer and being a hybrid is the capability

to shift from the role of the native and insider to the role of the anthropologist. A benefit of hybridity in anthropology is I am an insider to an outside reader--I have gained access that not many people have the opportunity of doing (Chawla 2006: 3). I acknowledge that at times my own personal ties and my emotions may cloud my judgment and it may cause me to emphasize a particular issue more than others. However, I contend that this may be beneficial to the over-all research because it directs me to address and ask questions that are important to immigrant females.

Since I am emotionally involved in the subject matter I deemed it vital for me to reflect on my own experiences of being a Fijian immigrant and growing up in Vancouver. I also want to place my own experiences growing up in Canada within a larger context. The best way I saw fit to do this was to integrate my voice with those of my informants. The auto-ethnography method highlights not only my role as the researcher but also as an immigrant person and how my personal journey as an immigrant has influenced the type of research and types of questions I address in this thesis.

Due to the type of research that I am interested in and the types of questions I wish to address I relied on semi-structured interviews with eight Fijian women who have immigrated to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The ages of these women range from 23-31 years old. In the interviews the women discuss their experiences growing up and going to high school in Canada, with special emphasis on their private home and family life and their public school life. I was also a participant observer at two different Fijian cultural festivals, one in Vancouver and one in Surrey. These festivals were in July 2010, two weeks apart from one another.

I used semi-structured interview questions to help guide my conversations with my informants (see Appendix A). I deemed a semi-structured interview to be the best method to

gain information as I realized that I would only have the opportunity to meet with the individual once or twice. As Russell Bernard (1988: 204-205) suggests, once this is realized, a semi-structured interview is the best method of interviewing as it characterizes many of the same types of freedom in an unstructured interview. In other words, in a semi-structured interview both the researcher and the informant acknowledge the premises of the interview, there is a clear plan, and the goal is to get the informant to open up and express themselves (Russell Bernard 1988: 204-205). The primary difference between a semi-structured interview and an unstructured interview is that a semi-structured interview is based on the use of an interview guide, which I relied on extensively.

The interview guide that I developed along with my thesis advisor was a list of questions and topics that we deemed important and that needed to be covered in a particular order. In semi-structured interviews the researcher remains discrete to follow the lead of the informant, but the interview guide is the set of instructions that he/ she must follow and address (Russell Bernard 1988: 205). Russell Bernard (1988: 205) suggests that an interview guide is necessary as it demonstrates professionalism, that you are prepared and competent, and suggests to your informant that you are in control of what you want from that interview but that you are not trying to present excessive control over your informant. It also leaves both you and your informant free to follow new and different leads. This can help create a relaxed relationship between you and your informant.

The relationships that I had established with my informants was both professional and peer-like. I made an effort for them to feel comfortable so that they could openly talk to me about their experiences. I did this by telling them a few of my own experiences and expressing how I decided to do the research that I was doing. Plainly I wanted to see if other immigrant



females had similar experiences growing up in Canada as I did. In other words, when it came up in conversation I exposed myself as well, to ensure that they could trust me as we may have had the same experiences or I expressed my understanding of their particular experiences. If it was similar, I shared my own background which also blurred the boundary between anthropologist and subject.

Before I set out to conduct my research in Vancouver, British Columbia I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Mississippi, which oversees and approves the use of human subjects in research. I followed the IRB protocol to do research on human subjects. Given that I was conducting research with individuals who were older than 18, I was able to use the abbreviated IRB application form according to the federal regulations and the university policy. There were two parts to the abbreviated IRB form. Part one of the IRB application was the screening of the research methods and the subjects of research I intended to use. Part two of the application questioned on what grounds I was qualified to do the research I sought to do and who would support me to do this research. I listed that I was doing the research for a thesis to obtain a Master of Arts degree and that my advisor supported me in this. I completed the application by the end of April 2010 and received approval in May 2010 from the Board to conduct my proposed research.

The women interviewed were out of high school. They had completed their high school careers in Canada and had moved on to either post secondary schooling, were working, or were on maternity leave. These individuals were all first generation Fijian immigrants who attended high school in Vancouver or the lower mainland. By being out of high school, my informants had an opportunity to reflect back on their experiences in high school without still being involved in the situation. I would argue that being somewhat separated from their high school

experience allowed some emotional separation, thus allowing them to grasp the whole picture of their immigrant status and how it influenced their experiences in high school.

The women I selected for this research were not necessarily representative of the entire female immigrant Fijian population in Vancouver. I obtained contact with these women through personal connections-- they were either family members, friends, friends of friends, or co-workers of my family. Still, I would contend that their experiences give some indication to the broader patterns of Fijian-Canadian young females. I selected a group of eight women before setting out to conduct my research. However, the group of women that are represented in this research were not the original group of eight. Once I was in Vancouver, three women dropped out of the research due to not being comfortable sharing their personal experiences or not having enough time to talk with me. Once this occurred I asked some of my family members to contact women who might be willing to talk with me about growing up and going to high school in Canada. Through this method, I then successfully recruited three more women. By mid-July, 2010, I had eight women to participate in my research and had already completed four interviews.

The interviews were conducted at many different locations. I used a hand-held tape recorder in my interviews so that I could give my full attention to the woman with whom I was speaking. I transcribed these interviews once I was back in Mississippi. I also took notes during the interview noting such things as individual body language, any hesitance or unwillingness to elaborate on certain questions, as well as if they were shy and not very talkative about the subject at hand. In some instances I talked with some of the women off tape. This either happened before or after the recorded conversation as a result of something that we had talked about earlier

but they felt better discussing these issues off tape. I did not take extensive notes at this time, but I wrote minimal notes during this portion of the conversation.

The interview guide was to aide me to keep on track during the interview and to not lose sight of the types of questions I needed to ask to gain a better understanding of female Fijian immigrants and their experiences of growing up in high school. I followed the guide in each interview. I did, however, judge how the conversations were headed and either skipped a question or two because the informant had already answered them, or I followed the informants lead into talking about what was important to her. But on the whole the guide was the primary tool used in conducting the interviews and for the most part followed entirely.

In December, 2010, I also conducted follow-up interviews with four of my informants. I did not veer from the original interview guide, but selected certain questions that I thought could be explained and answered in more detail by my informant. Before I conducted the follow-up interviews I went back to my transcriptions and selected certain questions that I thought needed further elaboration. These interviews also were at different locations and conducted in the same manner as the original interviews.

I have opted to use pseudonyms for my informants, primarily because the women were more comfortable with me not using their real names. Thus, I did not ask them their names during the interviews and will not be using them here in any way.

The eight women that I interviewed come from working-class families with both their parents either working full time or part-time while these women were in high school. Their parents were working class in that their means for sustainability came from their jobs. These women are visible minorities, meaning their skin tone is not of the dominant society but that of an Indo-Fijian in that it is varying tones of olive to brown.

The first person I interviewed was Falisha in June 2010. She is a 28-year-old woman who was born in Fiji and now lives in Vancouver. Falisha and her family immigrated to Canada when she was six years old. She is currently working full-time as a surgical assistant. She has two older siblings, an older brother and sister. Growing up she lived with her parents, grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins. I met with her at her house, and we sat outside on her lawn talking for over 20 minutes about her experiences growing up as an immigrant in Canada. I also did a follow-up interview with Falisha in December 2010 at her family home in Vancouver. We spoke for another 21 minutes.

The second person I interviewed was Annisha in June 2010. She is a 30-year-old woman who was born in Fiji and now lives in Vancouver. Annisha, her parents, brother, and sister immigrated to Canada when she was eight years old. She is currently on maternity leave from her job. Her two younger siblings, a sister and brother, were also born in Fiji. Growing up she lived with her parents and siblings, her grandmother, and five other families who all shared the same house. I met with her at her home while her mother took care of her two daughters while she talked with me. We spoke on tape for about 18 minutes and sat talking for about 15 minutes after the tape recorder was off. I also did a follow up interview with Annisha in December 2010 at her home and we spoke for about 25 minutes.

The third person I interviewed was Amina in July 2010. She is a 31-year-old woman who was born in Fiji, lived in Vancouver, and then moved to Surrey, which is a part of the lower mainland of British Columbia. Amina, her mother, older sister, and younger brother immigrated to Canada when she was 10 years old. She is currently working full time for an insurance agency. Growing up she lived with her mother, sister, and brother. I met with her for lunch at

Cactus Club, a local restaurant, and we both talked as we ate. I talked with her for 31 minutes on tape and about 30 minutes off tape.

The fourth person I interviewed was Maya in July 2010. She is a 28-year-old woman who was born in Fiji, grew up in Canada, and now lives in Seattle. She is currently working full time as an attorney in Seattle. Maya, her parents, and younger sister immigrated to Canada when she was five years old. Growing up she lived with her mother, father, and younger sister. I met with her at her parent's home in Vancouver. I talked with her for 21 minutes. I also did a follow up interview with Maya in December 2010 at her apartment in Seattle and we spoke for about 20 minutes.

The fifth person I interviewed was Sanita in August 2010. She is a 23-year-old woman who was born in Fiji, but now lives in Canada. Sanita, her parents, brother, and sisters immigrated to Canada when she was 14, thus she had already started high school in Fiji. She is currently working full time as a nurse. Growing up she lived with her mother, father, two older sisters, and a younger brother. I met with her at my parent's house in Vancouver, we talked privately in my living room about her experiences adjusting to a Canadian high school. We spoke for 11 minutes. Sanita was not among the original eight chosen, rather she was chosen as a substitution when three of the women dropped out of the research. This interview was substantially shorter than the rest because Sanita was not comfortable in talking with me. She gave me short responses to the questions I was asking and she did not want to elaborate. I found it difficult in helping Sanita open up to me, hence the short interview. She declined a possible follow-up interview.

The sixth person I interviewed was Rosanna in August 2010. She is a 25-year-old woman who was born in Fiji and now lives in Vancouver. She is currently working full time as a

nurse. Rosanna, her parents, brother, and sisters immigrated to Canada when she was 16. So Rosanna, like Sanita, had already started high school in Fiji. She completed high school in Canada with grades 11 and 12. Growing up she lived with her mother, father, one older sister, a younger sister, and a younger brother. I met with her at my parent's house in Vancouver. We talked privately in the living room about her transition from a Fijian high school to a Canadian one. We spoke for about 13 minutes. Rosanna also was not one of the original eight chosen for the research. She too was shy and unwilling to open up to me about her experiences. I did contact her for a follow-up interview, but she declined.

The seventh person I interviewed was Mamta in July 2010. She is a 28-year-old woman who was born in Fiji and now lives in Vancouver. She is currently working full time at a local animal shelter. Mamta, her parents, and her two brothers immigrated to Canada when she was 10 years old. Growing up she lived with her mother, father, and two older brothers. I met with her at her home and we talked in her living room. The interview lasted 23 minutes. I also did a follow-up interview with Mamta in December 2010 at her home and we spoke for about 27 minutes.

The eighth person I interviewed was Sameena in August 2010. She is a 28-year-old woman who was born in Fiji and now lives in Vancouver. She is currently working full time as a teller at a local bank. Sameena, her parents, her two brothers, and sister immigrated to Canada when she was one-and-a-half years old. Growing up she lived with her mother, father, two older brothers, and one older sister. I met with her at her home office. We spoke for about 25 minutes.

I not only relied on interviews, but once I was in the field I had the opportunity to attend two different Fijian festivals in Vancouver. These plans were not an original part of my research

plan, but once I became aware of the festivals I thought it would provide me with a good opportunity to engage in some participant observation. I concur with Dewalt and Dewalt (2002: 2) in referring to participant observation as a general approach to ethnographic research but more specifically here I refer to it as the recording of observations (field notes) at the festivals.

“Participant observation is a way to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings by observe and/or take part in the common activities of the people being studied” (Dewalt, Dewalt, and Wayland 1998: 260). It provided me with an opportunity to take part in the activities, rituals, interaction, and events of the people I was studying by the means of learning the precise and unspoken aspects of their culture (Dewalt et al. 1998: 260).

There were two festivals both in July 2010 and two weeks apart from one another. The festivals were in two different locations, one was a stadium-like setting where the Vancouver Whitecaps soccer team plays, and the other was at a provincial park. The festivals consisted of native and Indian Fijian music, food, dances, fashion shows, and language fairs. At the festivals I did not conduct interviews, I just observed and took notes. The festivals allowed me to see how this large community of Fijian immigrants come together to celebrate their culture.

At the festivals, I observed what was important to this cultural group through what they decided to engage in during the festival. Such things like food, cultural dances, and speaking the native language were important. I took brief notes on a note pad at the festivals. I also went back to my notes after the festivals at home to elaborate on the notes that I did take at the festivals. As Russell Bernard (1988: 149) observes, although it is difficult to conduct participant observation over a period of a few days, it is possible. I was able to gain access to these festivals because it is a public domain, and I was able to conduct reasonable participant observation. By being part of the Fijian-Canadian community I already had the native language skills and insider

knowledge of particular expectations of that community and thus understood the nuances of the customs from previous experiences at similar events (Russell Bernard 1988: 149). Using participant observation at the festivals helped me intellectualize what I already knew (Russell Bernard 1988: 149). Since people usually change their behavior when being observed one benefit in doing participant observation at the festivals is that people did not know that they were being observed (Russell Bernard 1988: 150). People went about their business and did not pay much attention to me. Russell Bernard (1988: 150) acknowledges that lower reactivity means higher validity of data.



#### IV. THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOMAINS OF FEMALE INDO-FIJIAN IMMIGRANTS

Being a part of two distinctly different worlds the young Indo-Fijian immigrants I studied have to navigate carefully both family expectations and norms as well as those of their school while simultaneously staying balanced. I associate the notion of two worlds in terms of domains, a concept that is regularly used by linguists when discussing language choice. Domains are social spheres or settings where different pressures and expectations exist that influence the individual towards the expression of one area of their overall personal identity over another (Romaine 1994:45). In each domain there are pressures of various types, including cultural, administrative, religious, and political, which influence an individual's expression of identity (Romaine 1994:45). For the purpose of my research and this case study, I divide the domains into two; the public life and the private life of the Indo-Fijian immigrant. I divide them this way because I notice that my informants make a clear distinction and separation between the two.

Public life is characterized as the domain in which the family is not directly involved. This is generally the domain which is outside of the home. The public life of an Indo-Fijian immigrant youth primarily includes school, activities that are associated with school such as hanging out with friends, after school sports, student councils, and extracurricular activities such as drama club, dance club, and multicultural club. The public life also includes people that come into contact with the immigrant youth outside of the home such as peers, friends, teachers, and community members. The public life is characterized by Canadian cultural norms and expectations.

The primary setting for the private life is the Fijian home and household. The extended family including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins are also usually part of this domain.

The private domain is characterized by Fijian cultural, social, and familial expectations. This domain includes all family functions, activities, and religious events in which the Indo-Fijian immigrant participates.

The split between the worlds is a consequence of belonging and interacting with two distinctly different cultures, that of Indo-Fijian culture and Canadian culture. I refer to Indo-Fijian culture as the homeland culture and Canadian culture as Western or the host culture. I define Indo-Fijian culture from an Indo-Fijian perspective on behalf of myself and the women I interviewed. Indo-Fijian culture is family oriented, and the main tenet for adolescents is to be respectful to elders, family members, and the family name. Young individuals are expected to oblige by these tenets without questioning them. In Amina's words "you can't disgrace your family or family's name." It is a strict culture in terms of discipline and the expectations required for adolescents.

Canadian culture, on the other hand, has been shaped by a number of migrations. Multiculturalism is the cultural norm in Canada, especially in Vancouver. Canadian culture places an emphasis on inclusiveness and equality for all people. Defined by the women I interviewed, Canadian culture is open and accepting. Meaning, these women believe that Canadian culture provides for freedom and equality. However, as we will see, freedom and equality are, in fact, difficult to attain.

Turning first to the public domain we see with whom the youth associates and encounters on a daily basis at school. The public domain interactions reveal specific experiences of growing up and attending school in Canada. As these interactions molded the type of experiences regarding their immigrant status in high school. For my informants, their experiences in high school varied depending on the type of high school and the dynamics of the high school they

attended. In particular, whether or not there was an immigrant population at their high school had an influence on the specific experiences of the immigrant. All the women that I interviewed attended a public high school in Vancouver or the lower mainland of Vancouver. All these individuals had another family member present at the school at the same time, either a sibling or a cousin. Six women self defined their high school as multicultural, or as one in which there is an immigrant community, meaning there were other individuals from other nationalities and in some cases other Indo-Fijians present at the school. Two women felt that their school was not multicultural because there was a limited number of Indo-Fijians or other Indians present.

### Racism in the Public Domain

Desai and Subramanian (2003: 138) have acknowledged that school is the first place where immigrant youth encounter racism, or, more specifically, skin-color racism. Skin-color racism is racism based on the color and tone of one's skin primarily towards those who have darker skin tones. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 131) highlight that in Canada, skin-color racism is inevitable and that skin color becomes extremely important in how one is treated in regards to what they can access, what opportunities that are available to them, and it also determines their quality of life. So by defining one's school as multicultural or not we are able to acknowledge where and to what degree Indo-Fijian immigrants experience racism. Immigrant youth may experience oppression based on their skin color and other's domination of these individuals especially in environments in which they are considered to be different or not the norm. In a multicultural high school, since there is a large population of people with dark skin tones, racism may not be overt.

Desai and Subramanian (2003: 137) acknowledge that racial minorities face discrimination and prejudice because they speak differently, dress differently, have a different skin color, and follow different social customs than the mainstream society. These features are an important part of their cultural identity and essentially make them a target for racism (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 138). Racism that these women experienced in high school had much influence on their personal identity. Lee (2005: 2) acknowledges that non-white immigrant youths learn that they must negotiate their identity with an already-in-place racial hierarchy where minorities are placed at the bottom and whites are placed at the top.

Racism has an impact on female Indo-Fijian adolescents and their identity because they quickly learn that despite their aptitude and capabilities, they will be seen as inferior because of their skin color. Many of the women I studied claim to have been a victim to racism primarily skin-color racism in and from their public and school life from their peers, teachers, or other community members. Sanita, for example, did not attend a multicultural high school and said that she experienced racism from her peers. She said that her peers made an assumption that she was from India and did not recognize her Fijian nationality and that they made fun of her because of that assumption. Annisha did not consider her high school as multicultural either because there were not many Indians or Indo-Fijians present. Annisha, too claimed that she experienced racism from her peers. She said because of her immigrant status and her skin color she felt different in high school. In her words, “Yeah so people definitely made it to know that you were different, whether it be your hair or skin or whatever.” She expressed that people also treated her differently in and around the community. “I think at that time everybody not only at school but outside of school in life regular day-to-day life made it where you knew that you weren’t where you belonged.” Annisha reflected back to a time when her family went to the

beach and noted how community members treated them in an ill manner. “We went as a family and these young kids they were Caucasian and they were pretty much making fun of us because we were Indian Fijian and because I was at that age so young I was just like I never wanna go back there again because they made it feel that I just didn’t belong there.” Obviously these individuals were left out and bullied by the mainstream society. These women were constantly reminded by the dominant society that they are Fijian and that they live in a society where race and skin-color racism structure their experiences, opportunities, and their personal identities.

Teachers play a vital role in immigrant youths’ school career. Sill, teachers could also be a source of racism. How their teachers treated them is important in understanding their experiences in the public and school life. Five of the women I interviewed acknowledged that they felt some degree of racism from their teachers. Annisha explained that since she was one of the only Indian or Indo-Fijian girls at her high school her socials studies and science teachers treated her differently. “I had a hard time with my socials and science teachers. It seemed that there was an attitude towards race, I don’t know that’s how it felt.” Sanita felt racism towards her by her math teacher. She reflected that because she had her own methods in solving math problems her math teacher thought she could not speak or understand English properly. As a result her math teacher requested that she be put into ESL classes.

“My math teacher asked me to solve a problem and I did it my way, but she wanted me to do it her way, but her way was so complicating, she figured I didn’t know English so she said okay I am going to talk to one of your counselors and set up ESL classes and I was like I know English. So, I went to the counselor and was like why does she want me to take ESL? I know English. You can see that I am speaking to you right now.”

Racism from teachers also occurred at the multicultural schools.

Rosanna who went to a multicultural school also felt some degree of racism from her math teacher. She said that because she was quiet and timid her math teacher thought she could

not understand English and also requested for her to take ESL classes. “She told me that I needed ESL class and okay she was really strict so whatever she said I kept quiet and listened to her, never said anything to her so the next day the ESL teacher comes. So we were talking right and he goes ‘oh I don’t think you need ESL’ this is what the ESL teacher said, right!” Rosanna understood her math teacher’s request to be a reaction to her skin color. Mamta also expressed that because of her immigrant status or skin color her teachers put her in ESL. “They automatically, because I am from Fiji plunked me right into ESL although, you know I didn’t have a problem speaking English. I thought it was bizarre you know because they just automatically assumed.”

From my own experiences as an auto-ethnographer, I had a similar experience, to that of Mamta. I did understand English and knew how to speak it. I went through grade one without a problem. But in grade two my teacher separated me from the rest of my classmates into a smaller ESL class. I remember feeling embarrassed each time I had to leave my classroom to go into the ESL classroom because everyone knew where I was going. I felt that people thought I did not understand English or that I was unintelligent. For the most part I remember being in the class and not understanding why I was there. The words that we were supposed to be learning I already knew, I could recognize them, put them in context and spell them. I soon realized that I did not belong in the class. I thought, perhaps I did need an ESL class but not the one I was currently in, maybe I needed an advanced ESL class. This issue was not addressed throughout the rest of my years in ESL. I stayed in the ESL class until I was in grade five when I transferred schools. In my new school I was not required to take ESL classes. Trying to explain this now, I believe I was subjected to skin-color racism by my teacher. I believe this to be true because I

had a number of older cousins at that school and all of them who had that teacher were required to take ESL classes, and those that did not have her for a teacher, ESL was not mandatory.

### ESL Classes

Obviously, being put in ESL in high school caused many issues and emotions for these immigrant women. ESL has a certain stigma attached, and the individuals who were in the program felt it hindered them in their day-to-day public life. Instead of ESL being beneficial for the individual it became problematic in that it distanced the individuals from mainstream school and they became outcasts, making it even more difficult to fit in. The women who confessed to saying that ESL was embarrassing also admitted that being in ESL somehow puts into question one's intelligence. Annisha expressed that being an immigrant is stressful in itself and an added stress is dealing with how others perceive ESL classes. "Like I mean you have enough stress in high school to fit in, and then you've got the extra where you have to go to ESL, you don't have a choice. Because of either pronunciation or you know the accent I had to take ESL without a choice. You felt embarrassed 'cause you know everybody knew where you were going." Amina was also embarrassed about being in ESL. "Being stuck in ESL automatically you went to ESL like they just assumed that you didn't know anything. For two years while I was in school I refused to speak." She felt that because of her skin color people treated and spoke to her like she had a learning disability. As a consequence to this and others reactions Amina decided not to speak. These women acknowledged that there was a stigma associated with ESL classes and they tried hard not to be associated with it by downplaying or resisting their involvement with ESL. They did not want to be associated with ESL classes because they noticed the dominant culture's negative view and they did not want to be outcasts because of their involvement with



ESL. These individuals began to share the same views on ESL as the dominant culture, and they tried to distance themselves from it.

In Fiji, students have much respect for their teachers and do not question their actions. This is the reason myself nor anyone in my family questioned the teacher's actions regarding ESL. Mamta, too, ascribed to this notion, and she did not initially question her teachers about being put in the ESL program. As she put it,

“Although my teachers did put me in the ESL program that goes to show that I was in ESL for primarily like 4 years because with that whole respect dynamics because when you come from Fiji your teachers are always right. So, it took me at least 4 years for my parents to actually stand up and say you know what I don't think my child belongs in this course.”

Mamta's parents took the initiative to stand up for their daughter. They most likely realized the stigma that is attached to ESL, and they knew that their daughter did not belong in the class. In addition, they had academic aspirations for their daughter and they realized that being in ESL could possibly hinder those aspirations.

### Friends in the Public Domain

With whom an immigrant connects with in their public and school life is also shaped by their immigrant status and skin color. Friends often are a support system for an immigrant and lend a hand in forming an immigrant adolescent's self-identity, whether it be embracing their Indo-Fijian identity or hiding it. Seven of the eight women I interviewed acknowledged that they had many good friends and only one confessed to being a “loner and somewhat anti-social.” Amina considered her high school to be multicultural as there were representatives of many nationalities there. Amina was one who embraced her Indo-Fijian identity at school. She surrounded herself with other Indo-Fijians, and they called themselves the “Fijian group.” There

were over 30 Fijians in the group. According to Amina, “it was all about living I don’t know I guess being proud of being Fijian. We drank Kava, [a drink made from Kava root and drunk at social gatherings] ‘cause we were Fijian ‘cause you know we thought that yeah we are Fijian and we have to live up the name.” She said that she associated with other Indo-Fijians because they were in the same predicament as her. “It was pride. So yeah, it was fun and it was energetic to me to be in a high school where there was a lot of Fijians and like ‘cause like everybody came from Fiji. And everybody was lost just like you and nobody ever talked about it. We just hung out.”

Obviously, associating with other Indo-Fijians who were in the same situation provided Amina with the support she needed in a new culture. Amina’s experience reflects the conclusion of Desai and Subramanian (2003: 141) that youth in schools where they are not the only immigrant express strong self-confidence and self-identity. In Amina’s case connecting with peers that shared similar backgrounds and cultures played an important role of support and created a sense of comfort in the school environment. This also shielded her from racism that may she may have experienced by her peers if they did not share similar origins. In other words, if she did not associate with other Indo-Fijians or if they were not present at the school she may have been a victim to racism by other schoolmates because she would have been notably different

Although there were a handful of immigrants there, Annisha did not categorize her high school as multicultural because there was a limited number of Indians or Indo-Fijians present. She associated herself with outgoing and social girls, and she even went as far to say others saw them as trouble-makers. She defined being a trouble-maker as “they were really loud, um they wouldn’t make all of their classes all the time and they loved to party and be involved with boys

a lot.” Annisha felt that because of her immigrant status and skin color she was targeted for discrimination by others at her school. She soon found a niche with the “trouble-makers,” but she also was not comfortable associating with the few Indians or Indo-Fijians at her school. She feared that if she did become friends with other Indo-Fijian girls it would have changed the dominant culture’s perspective of her. Since she tried hard to be accepted by the dominant culture, she feared that if she associated herself with other Indo-Fijian girls at school, that she would be excluded from the group she strove to fit into (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 140). In her later years of high school she grew more comfortable. “Probably grade 11 or grade 10, I was comfortable being around Indians. At that point it didn’t matter who I was hanging out with cause at that point it felt that you had already made your mark about who you were.”

Mamta initially surrounded herself with other Indo-Fijian girls in high school, however, as she advanced in high school she eventually reconnected with girls from her elementary school that were not Indo-Fijian. She said that her group of friends, both immigrants and white-Canadians, were outgoing. Mamta expressed that she liked that her friends were of different nationalities “because it you know gives you an understanding. It brings tolerance and understanding.” I suggest that Mamta reconnected with her initial group of friends because she shared a history with them, they had things in common such as attending the same elementary school, they had similar experiences attending that school and her friends had already accepted her. All of this provided for a sense of protection. Finally, being friends with girls that were different was not a constant reminder of how an Indo-Fijian girl should act, she could be her own person without having the pressures from other Indo-Fijian girls telling her how a proper Fijian girl should act. This allowed Mamta to ascribe to Canadian cultural norms without feeling guilty

about being a Fijian and not always acting like a Fijian should act, something she would have to face with the Indo-Fijian girls in high school.

Personally, I can attest to this notion since I, too, did not surround myself with other Indo-Fijian girls in high school. I felt I had more in common with the Canadian-born girls in terms of sports and other extracurricular activities in which we involved ourselves. Desai and Subramanian (2003: 140) suggest that this is not uncommon for females who have spent a long time in Canada. These girls have tried all along to fit in with the dominant culture, that results in them becoming more comfortable with those not from Indo-Fijian origins as they become familiar with the language, mannerisms, and social expectations of the dominant culture.

Sameena, Rosanna, Falisha, and Maya had a diverse group of friends that were representative of many nationalities not just Fijian. I suggest as a result of attending a multicultural high school these women noted that there were many individuals that were different. For these four women, they relayed that in their multicultural high school there were other immigrants, thus they did not see themselves as being that different. In a sense it was ineffective for them to differentiate themselves from other immigrants and others at school because they felt that their peers were already accepting of their Indo-Fijian origins and it was not necessary for them to address. As we will see in chapter five, these women did not particularly embrace their Indo-Fijian identity at school for extremely complicated reasons.

### Freedom in the Public Domain

Immigrant parents want to come to Canada because of the number of opportunities and freedoms they believe it offers (Ben-Sira 1997: 7; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 118; Lee 2005: 3; Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 19). This notion is then passed onto the children in that

they envision a nation that is open and free. Once exposed to Canadian culture, freedom becomes an important concept. For the women I studied, their public and school lives provided opportunities to explore this idea of freedom. Defined by my informants, freedom entails being able to socialize, having friends of the opposite sex, attending school functions such as school dances and camping trips, and being able to have or attend sleep overs. They also expressed that most of the freedom they had was in their public life. Asher (2008: 15) notes that school offers a greater degree of independence than home in terms of social and cultural aspects. Annisha told that “your freedom was outside of the house when I was growing up. So, I think we did our socializing at school rather than at home.” She went on to say that she did not pay much attention to her education because she concentrated on hanging out with friends. Amina, too, offered that because she was concentrating on having friends and being social that she did not pay much attention at school and started to skip school. These two women justify neglecting their education by pointing to the fact that they were not given freedom at home. Home was a strict environment, and at school they had their freedom. Falisha agreed that at school there was more freedom in terms of who you were allowed to talk to or associate with, whereas at home her grandmother would only encourage her to speak to other Indo-Fijian girls. Sameena, too, recognized that she had freedom at school in terms of the things she was able to do or the way she spoke. In her words, “in school if you did something you don’t get scolded. At home if you do something you get scolded. At school you can swear and don’t get into trouble for it. At home, there was no way I could swear.”

Despite their experiences with racism, being shunted into ESL classes, and so on, these women see their host culture offering freedoms that their homeland culture denies. Immigrant youths often encounter the school as being more flexible and open than their private life (Asher

2008: 15). However, one must take into consideration the contradiction of freedom and racism. Asher (2008: 15) notes that youths encountered a range of messages that contradict the apparent freedom. These Indo-Fijian women are in a society where racism structures their experiences, opportunities, and identities and where their immigrant status and skin color actually hinders many opportunities. Despite this, these women see the latitudes of freedom that are not allowed in Indo-Fijian culture and gravitate towards those offered in the Canadian culture.

This notion of freedom is also gendered. As youths grow older, the gendered nature of family dynamics impose different constraints on girl's activities outside of the home (Orellana 2009: 53). Fijian parents, as discussed previously, see their daughters as the caretakers of Indo-Fijian culture. Thus, females are held to a different set of rules and standards than their brothers. The women who talked about the gendered differences reflected that the primary difference was the small amount of freedom they had compared to their brothers. For example, they had early curfews or would not be allowed out with friends at all. Amina related that she did not have much interaction with her friends unless it was at school and that she was not allowed out with friends or to go to their homes "It was very much school then home, and that was it." Orellana (2009: 53) and Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 34) propose that even when activities such as visiting with friends is not an activity that is overtly gendered, it may become gendered because of the nature of the strong gender component in the family.

They also saw that they were treated differently from their brothers or other male members of the family. However, they also saw that Canadian culture regarded both males and females equally, yet this was not represented in their private life. In fact, the women who said that they were treated differently than their male family members said that their parents had separate expectations of them and that they were less lenient and more strict because they were

female. Sameena expressed that her and her sister were treated differently than her brothers, that her brothers did not have any responsibilities at home, “they [Sameena’s brothers] were free going all the time. They were allowed to have friends over at anytime and they didn’t have to go to all the weddings and functions we always had to go, me and my sister, even if we didn’t want to go we had to go. Had to be the good little daughter.” Falisha also recalled that her parents and grandmother had a lot of restrictions regarding friends. However, their brother did not have the same restrictions. This strictness and lack of freedom comes from parent’s concern with their daughters remaining traditional and abiding by traditional values and customs. Parents who do not accept the norms of the mainstream culture believe it to be a threat to their homeland cultural values and they become strict on their daughters. Due to such tensions at home these women see school and being in their public life as enjoyable and free.

However, this notion of gendered freedom in the public life in reality is not entirely true. In fact, Canadian social institutions and organizations are inherently gendered, they are designed, conceptualized, and controlled by men (Britton 2000: 421). There is a division between men and women in the public domain, and people in the public domain abide by these gendered divisions and norms and act upon them (Williams 1995: 4). So, in reality, even in the public domain, men have greater advantages than women because of western cultural beliefs that men are correlated with power and prestige (Schilt 2006: 485). The individuals in this study, however, overlooked this because they concentrate on their own notions of gender equality. These women suggested that in their public life gender equality is a given but they were comparing it with Fijian standards without any deep knowledge of what was actually happening in Canada.

## Responsibilities in the Private Domain

Indo-Fijian culture takes its roots from the South Asian Indian culture. Indo-Fijian culture is described as spiritual and respectful, and it deeply revolves around both the core and extended family. Generally, in Indo-Fijian culture the women of the family are the caretakers of the home and family. Children of the family are also considered representatives of their parents' teachings and core values and they are expected to hold on to these in day-to-day life. Indo-Fijian parents have a number of expectations for their children in the host country such as educational aspirations, chores, attending functions with the family, and abiding by their homeland cultural norms. Parents try to raise their children in Canada the same way that they would raise them in Fiji. According to Canadian standards, however, the parents may be seen as more strict. Immigrant youths, then, are exposed to and oftentimes gravitate to the Canadian cultural norms and expectations, yet they are simultaneously expected to adhere to the Indo-Fijian culture.

Whereas in their public, school lives, young immigrant girls can exercise their "freedoms," in their home and private lives they adhere to Indo-Fijian norms. All of the women I interviewed except Amina grew up in a household of two working parents. Amina was raised by a single mother. Responsibilities in the home and private life are a vital aspect of an Indo-Fijian upbringing and the responsibilities of the women I interviewed varied. Most of the women were expected to participate in household chores, although chores varied depending on the dynamics of the household. Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2003: 34) suggest that the eldest child usually had more responsibilities especially in a household of two working parents. Most households of my informants, too, placed a heavier workload on the eldest daughter. For example, Annisha had to learn and know how to cook for a large family by age 16. Annisha



expressed that she had a number of responsibilities at home such as cooking, cleaning, and in the summer having a job to help support her family. Because of the immense responsibilities she said, “I don’t remember a lot of fun times. I was expected to kinda do things almost repetitively, almost everyday was the same thing.” Sameena also said that some of her responsibilities at home were cleaning and that she learned how to cook in grade nine. Amina described her responsibilities at home as “typically Indian.” She had to clean the house and learn how to cook as well as keep her personal space tidy. Mamta said that her responsibilities at home were “basic,” which meant cleaning the house and helping her mother cook dinner when she got home from school. Maya’s responsibility as the eldest child was to take care of her little sister when her parents were at work. However, she noted that her parents did not expect her to learn how to cook. Sanita, as one of the youngest children in her family, shared that her responsibilities at home were to cook and clean only on the weekends. Rosanna, also one of the youngest in her family, said that she did not have any chores or responsibilities. In fact, she said that she was a “regular high school kid.” Falisha is the youngest in her family and when asked about chores and responsibilities at home she said “as the younger one I mostly got off the hook for it.”

### Parents’ Control

Indo-Fijian parents also try to control what their children do outside of the home. Some parents limit the exposure to Canadian culture as much as possible. For example, they prohibit their daughters from attending school dances or sleep-overs. Sleep-overs are typical teenage behavior in Canadian culture but Mamta, Maya, and Falisha acknowledged that this was not the norm in Indo-Fijian culture. Maya explained not being able to attend sleep-overs:

“it has to do with cultural [norms] you know, I think that parents just wanted us home so they could keep an eye on us as opposed to going to somebody else’s house where they

don't know how those children are being reared and they don't know how like what kind of limitations, like restraints like what those children are being taught.”

As Maya's experience shows, parents want to be in control of their children's upbringing, and not allowing their daughters to attend sleep-over's makes it easier to control their social environment because they are not being exposed to how others raise their children. Mamta explained that her parents simply did not understand the concept of attending a sleep-over. She said that she wanted to go to sleep-overs because she saw them as fun and exciting and innocent. Her parents did not see it the same way, and she commented that “it was almost painful explaining it to my parents.” Mamta suggests that her parents thought that sleep-overs could lead to other things such as boys or men being present and they were not comfortable with that idea. Mamta said that her parents “looked upon [her] as a woman and I shouldn't be going to other people's house where there are men.” Parents had strict limitations on their daughters in regards to dating. They feared the possibility that males being present at sleep-overs could lead to their daughter interacting with them, even if it was innocent.

Unlike in Canada, in Indo-Fijian culture dating is not the norm. Immigrant parents fear that since it is accepted for girls in Canada their daughter may get involved in dating. As a result, parents enforce strict rules on their daughters regarding dating. Many Indo-Fijian parents go so far as to forbid their daughters from having friends of the opposite sex. Six of the eight women I interviewed agreed that their parents had strong feelings about dating and having male friends. Mamta explained that she was not allowed to have a boyfriend. “You know in my mind that's a Fijian norm, like girls are not really, openly, can't have you know boyfriends, that's that.” Mamta explained that her parents did not accept the idea of her having a boyfriend. “The whole like no gallivanting around town with boys that was not acceptable that has never been acceptable in Fijian culture unless, we were determined to get married.” Amina said that her

mother, too, was strict about this and that she was not allowed to have a boyfriend or male friends. According to Amina

“my mom screened every phone call. We weren’t allowed to talk to boys, we used to sit there like if a boy did call we would get on the phone... listen to the movie listings until the line beeped and then you would answer the phone cause the whole time your mom thinks that you’re sitting there getting information... instead I would be talking to a boy.”

Maya said that her dad was over-protective, which is why her male friends could not call her house. She even learned not to mention her male friends in conversation because her parents “didn’t like the idea of too many boys around, I don’t know it was just easier to omit those things rather than just get into it with them.” In fact, Annisha, Mamta, Amina, Sameena, and Falisha, all, chose to exclude or downplay the topic of boys in their family conversations. This is an important restriction to note as many female youths date and have male friends in their public life but they opt to omit any mention of these activities in their private life. Dating is not accepted in Indo-Fijian culture and it was absent until the exposure to Canadian culture (Morrison, Guruge and Snarr 1999: 148). Immigrant parents do not agree with dating because they see it as symbolizing an eradication of Indo-Fijian cultural values (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 145).

Although daughters know and understand their parent’s rules on the issue, they accept Canadian norms and secretly date. Sameena told that she was not allowed to date, however, “I did it secretly I also had crushes and people you talk to on the phone and stuff, but you weren’t allowed to. It wasn’t in our culture to have one [a boyfriend].” I, too, engaged in similar behavior. I understood that my parents did not support this act but I defied them. I was not trying to be disrespectful, but I wanted to be given my own choice. I suggest that this is the main motivation for why young female immigrants engage in this behavior. It is because they want

their own independence and freedom to choose their own life partner, which is something that their parents fear especially since in Fijian culture parents actively participate in marriage selections. Parents fear that their children might not select mates from the same culture, race, or religious background. Like my informants, I wanted to experience what Canadian friends were doing. I wanted to be part of Canadian culture. I thought that dating would bring me closer to achieving this goal of understanding and knowing what a Canadian teenager was feeling. This is an example of Indo-Fijian females negotiating two separate worlds. They are attracted to and partake in Canadian norms of dating, but present themselves as otherwise to their parents.

### Parents' Educational Expectations

Parental expectations for their children's education also inform the private lives of their daughter. It is important to parents that their children take advantage of the educational opportunities that Canada provides. Parents acknowledge that their child must be educated to provide a good future for themselves. They also understand that coming to Canada aided in ensuring these aspirations. Parents then advise their children to not stray from their studies; something their children consider as being strict. Parents would like to keep their child's socializing to a minimum as they understand it to compromise their concentration on school. This distraction is shown by Annisha. She admits that because she was concentrated on socializing at school that she did not take advantage of educational opportunities. This is what parents are trying to avoid, thus they are seen as strict. Mamta said that going to college "was an expectation like because my parents always said to me that you know that there is no reason, there is no excuse, why you can't because you have come to Canada." Mamta also saw that her parents made sacrifices in order to provide her with the opportunity to be educated. Five of the

eight women in this study seem to have accepted this expectation as they furthered their education beyond high school. Immigrant parents instill this notion in their daughters that education is key for being successful in Canada because it better their chances to obtain a good job and for self-sustainability. I, too, noticed the sacrifices my parents made for me to be educated. I accepted their view of the importance of education and went on to get a post-secondary education thinking that it was the only possibility. The majority of the women in this study accept and abide by this notion of the importance of education for their future.

As these examples demonstrate, Indo-Fijian females live in two different worlds. The public life comprises different expectations, freedoms, and experiences than the private life. The private life is composed of the family and home and the specific expectations and restrictions enforced by their parents. In the private life there are limits in socializing and gender equality. Parents try to limit the exposure to Canadian culture and to teach their daughter the way of life of an Indo-Fijian in order to grow into an acceptable and responsible Indo-Fijian woman. In the private life the youth are expected to do household chores and have other responsibilities. They are also expected to be good Fijian daughters and achieve educational goals. There are also restrictions on dating, or having male friends, attending sleep-overs, and hanging out with friends after school. All of this is in direct contrast to what they are exposed to in their public lives. In the public life youths are given different freedoms such as a sense of gender equality, the ability to make friends with individuals outside of their homeland culture, and they have less responsibilities. Although the public life can be trying in terms of discrimination and racism, most of my informants drifted toward the public domain because of the freedoms it offers. These women live in two different worlds with different regulations, acceptances, and

expectations and they are expected to adjust and maneuver through both in their day-to-day lives.  
As detailed in the next chapter, this is not as easy as it may seem.

V: STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING TWO WORLDS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE  
NEW HYBRID

In this chapter, I concentrate on how the female Indo-Fijian immigrants I interviewed address their personal identity in both public life and private life as well as how they negotiate their identity. Identity is conceptualized as being socially constructed and comparative (Shahsiah 2006: 3). Shahsiah (2006: 3) suggests that identity can only be recognized or understood when contrasted to something that is considered different, in this case the dominant Canadian culture. There is a cognizant recognition of differences which is an inherent feature of self-identification (Shahsiah 2006: 3). The individuals in this study recognize that they are not like the dominant society and this acknowledgement of difference guides them in their self-identification process.

The racial hierarchy of the dominant culture is an important factor in identity construction for immigrants. Visible identity markers such as skin color are significant for the social construction of others (Shahsiah 2006: 4). “The person who is marked because of his or her embodied skin color is not given much choice to escape such ascriptions placed upon one’s identity” (Shahsiah 2006: 4). Canada is a country that is race conscious, and as a result, self-identification is contingent on this because societal processes instill skin color as the marker to justify differentiated identities (Shahsiah 2006: 4). In other words, because of the racialized world that these women live in they do not have the complete freedom to self-identify themselves as they please. “Identities are constituted along borders that separate who one is from who one is not” (Lee 2005: 53). For these women they are cast as “others” by the dominant society because they look different, and the primary marker of difference is their skin color. However, with this said, the women in this study defined personal identity as an answer to



who one is at the present time and how one acknowledges themselves in their different worlds (Shahsiah 2006: 22).

In addition, identity formation is contingent on various other factors such as the type of school one attended, socio-economic status, gender, as well as the racial hierarchies of the host culture (Brettell and Nibbs 2009: 679). Self-identification is a complex notion that has many layers. Due to the racialised world that many of these individuals live in, a sense of belonging becomes essential (Desai and Subramanian 2003: 137). Shahsiah (2006: 7) defines racialisation as the practice in which some receive power, status, and prestige and others are denied on the basis of their skin color. Since immigrant minorities are already placed in the “other” category based on their physical appearance, these individuals attempt to identify themselves as someone who fits coherently into society. But, because their different skin color is different from that of the dominant society, skin color becomes an important social process that arbitrates in identity formation (Shahsiah 2006: 7). These individuals have to deal with being categorized and “othered” through name-calling, labeling, racial slurs, and personal-level prejudices (Shahsiah 2006: 23). This is especially difficult for adolescents because they are trying to find a place in their worlds (Asher 2008: 13; Desai and Subramanian 2003: 137).

### Hybridity and the New Hybrid

When speaking about immigrant youth and their identity formation there is a common consensus that these individuals become a hybrid of the cultures to which they belong. So, hybrid identities emerge when immigrant youth are in-between different cultures (Asher 2008: 13). Hybridity takes its roots from biology, and it may also be applied to people, culture, traditions, and languages (Kapchan and Strong 1999: 240). Essentially, cultural hybridity is the

mixture of two or more cultures, or a cultural “mixedness” (Brettell and Nibbs 2009: 680; Kapchan and Strong 1999: 240). Defined, a cultural hybrid person is one who embodies and blends the expectations and qualities of two different cultures and/or traditions; this process may be either unconscious or conscious (Kapchan and Strong 1999: 243; Shahsiah 2006: 26; Stross 1999:254). Hybridity is “the practice and decision-making processes by which migrants bring together elements of their ethnic, racial, and [North] American lifestyles, at times simultaneously, to form a distinctive way of being” (Brettell and Nibbs 2009:680). A hybrid identity may be crafted by synthesizing the differences one encounters in each of the different cultures (Asher 2008: 15). In this study, however, Indo-Fijian females attempt to appease the public and private worlds that they belong to not create conflict.

Although, at first glance the female Indo-Fijian immigrants I studied seem to be a product of cultural hybridity, upon further consideration I find that this is not so clear, rather there are many ambiguities to the hybridity model that need to be addressed. The true description of a cultural hybrid person would have the person embody the beliefs and expectations from both cultures. However, in this specific case study, the resultant identities may not be so synthetic, which calls for a rethinking of hybridity. I believe that in this case these individuals are not true hybrids of their Fijian culture and their Canadian culture. Rather, they are what I term to be a “new hybrid.” A new hybrid is a person who abides by the rules, regulations and expectations of the multiple cultures she belongs to. However, she does not do this with her own accord; rather she does so in order to appease others living in each of the cultures with which she is involved. A new hybrid maintains cultural traits not voluntarily but is pulled by a culture and she follows the norms and expectations to make others happy and to not create problems. They are not true blends, but rather the new hybrid express only certain aspects of a culture that they deem

necessary and acceptable within that culture and within certain domains. In other words, she realizes that if she favors one culture's norms and expectations over the other then the people in the other culture may have issues with it. The female Indo-Fijian immigrants I studied are new hybrids because they see all that Canadian culture has to offer, in terms of specific freedoms and gender equality, and they want to be a part of Canadian culture. However, they are pulled back to their Indo-Fijian culture, and they abide by the cultural norms and expectation to make their parents and other family members happy. And they are forced into their immigrant identities by the racism they face in day-to-day life in Canada. A new hybrid, then, is a person who is in constant negotiation with their identities depending on the domain in which they find themselves.

#### Indo-Fijian Roots in the Public Domain

The manner in which my informants identified themselves at school gives insights in to whether or not they embraced their homeland culture as a part of their identity. As we have seen, the way they identified themselves at school depended greatly on the dynamics of their school. As defined by my informants, these schools may or may not have been multicultural although they had at least a cousin or a sibling present at the school. The individuals who embraced their Indo-Fijian identities tended to have other Indo-Fijian peers present at the school which meant that they would be comfortable around others like them. They embraced their Indo-Fijian origins by acknowledging it and not shying away from it when people asked their background. These individuals would not change their appearance in terms of their dress code when they arrived at school. Some individuals like Sanita and Rosanna stayed true to their origins by not participating in what they considered overtly Canadian, like spending large amounts of time with friends outside of school, and they did not attend school dances. Amina too, was one who

embraced her Indo-Fijian heritage but she did so differently than the other two women because she did participate in activities that are characterized to be Canadian, but she also physically and emotionally embraced her Indo-Fijian origin. She wore tee shirts that said “Fijian Pride” on them to establish her roots. She attended a multicultural high school and said that there were other individuals at her school that shared the same experiences as her and she connected with them on a personal level. She said that by embracing her Indo-Fijian culture at school it gave her a sense of belonging to that society. In her words, “it was pride.” Amina, unlike many of the other women, liked to flaunt the fact that she was different physically and accepted her features and skin color. As she put it, “we had the tan skin, we had different cheek bones, different chin bones, different hair, and it was just showing that off because everybody found it so interesting that you weren’t East Indian or what they were used to looking at. They wanted to know what you were.”

However, some woman attending multicultural high schools did not embrace their Indo-Fijian roots. In this case, the individual did not deem it important to do so as they did not consider themselves different. Falisha, Sameena, and Maya identified themselves at school as not different from their peers. They further suggested that their Indo-Fijian culture did not play a large role in their high school identity. Falisha asserted that she “didn’t really associate it [her Indo-Fijian culture] I mean, yeah, I didn’t really associate it.” This attitude of not acknowledging her origin can be explained by understanding that Falisha did not see herself different from her peers. Because she had been in Canada for so many years, she did not recognize herself to be different from other Canadians because she shared the same views and mannerisms of someone who was born in Canada. Thus, she did not find it important to distinguish herself from others by acknowledging her origin. Maya thought her Indo-Fijian roots

did not change her identity at school either. As she stated, “I mean honestly, not that much with regards to high school and like being in high school, I mean I’ve always had my culture be present you know, I’ve always liked it to be a part of it in my home life, but regards to high school I don’t think I never consciously thought that it would matter that I am Fijian Indian and that makes me different.” Maya suggested that her Fijian origin did not belong at school because it did not have a place in the dominant culture. She suggested that her Fijian culture belonged at home and that is where she embraced it. Sameena said that because she migrated to Canada at such a young age her Indo-Fijian culture did not figure into her high school identity. Because she also did not believe her Indo-Fijian origins were compatible with her public life because from a young age she only equated her Canadian culture with school.

These individuals did not acknowledge their Indo-Fijian roots at school because they did not see any importance in doing so or they felt it did not belong. Most of these women did not willingly acknowledge their immigrant status unless they were forced to by the dominant society and the educational system. The educational system, however, made it known that these women were different in ways such as enforcing ESL classes upon them. ESL classes were seen as the rightful place for an immigrant to be in by the educational faculty and system. The educational system as well as the dominant society forced these women to acknowledge their immigrant status involuntarily by placing an emphasis on their differences. However these individuals who did not think their Indo-Fijian roots made them different suggested that their personal identity was not shaped by their origins. Rather, they realized that individuals at their multicultural school were accepting of the many cultures that were already present there. By realizing that others, mainly their peers, did not try and cast them as different, it did not concern them to take

the time and make the distinction themselves. In other words, not openly acknowledging their differences made their identity uncomplicated and unproblematic to them.

But, this was not always the case. For example, Mamta relayed that although she attended a multicultural high school she still did not feel completely at ease because she did consider herself different. It is difficult for most immigrants to embrace their origins especially if they see others are not accepting of them. Thus they must negotiate their identities to fit into what the dominant culture has already established to be acceptable (Lee 2005: 2). In other words, these individuals understand there to be uncomfortable situations if they were to outright acknowledge their Indo-Fijian roots. Situations such as being asked personal questions about their origins, cultural norms, family, and the private life, is why they downplay their origins at school. When Mamta was asked about her Fijian background and if she embraced it at school she said “I didn’t really like talking about it much.” Mamta said that she was embarrassed by her Fijian roots because she “did not want to be different, I wanted to be just like molded into the same social structure.” Mamta stated “I would love to say that I did embrace it [Indo-Fijian identity] and loved it and it was fantastic but for the most part I honestly do remember I used to pretend I was born and raised in Vancouver. I did not want to be different.”

Lee (2005: 54) notes that immigrant youths usually live in a society where immigrant status is stigmatized, so they have to manipulate and alter themselves to be accepted. In Mamta’s case, she identified herself as being different, but she did not want others to see her in the same way because of the stigma attached to her immigrant status, so she downplayed her immigrant origins in order to be accepted by her peers. The difference between Mamta and Falisha, Sameena, and Maya are that Mamta consciously did not address her immigrant status because she knew that people would treat her differently. Mamta already accepted that she was

different than the dominant society because of her skin tone, but she did not want others to realize that she was different based on where she was born. She acknowledged that she was, in fact, different in terms of her origins, but feared that if it were out in the open people would consider her even more alien. In an attempt to avoid being an outcast she consciously fibbed and refrained from telling her peers and others that she was born in Fiji in the hopes that she would be accepted by the dominant society.

From my own experiences, I can relate with Mamta. In high school I realized that I was different in terms of my skin color and my origins but I did not address them. I feared that if I acknowledged it openly then people would treat me differently. I did not want to create problems for myself, in terms of not being able to fit in. I did not want to be different unless being different had something to do with my specific achievements at school that others could obtain regardless of their specific origins. I wanted to be like everyone else at school, so I dismissed my Indo-Fijian background unless I was specifically asked about it.

Those individuals who did not attend a multicultural high school also tended to downplay their Indo-Fijian origins in an attempt to blend in. Annisha was one who did not consider her high school a multicultural one, and she chose to hide her Indo-Fijian origins as best she could. She said that “you had to create your own or try to be somebody else. You didn’t have a chance to show people who you were.” She tried to be someone that she was not in an attempt to fit in. The down side to not embracing her Indo-Fijian roots was that she realized that people did not get to see the real Annisha. She says that she did not outright tell people her background because she was concerned that it would have changed people’s perception of her and she tried hard to fit in.

## Strategies of Public Presentation

The way that my informants presented themselves physically, emotionally, and socially to others is also important in understanding how their identities were shaped. The way that some of these individuals presented themselves physically was the result of pressures and expectations from each world in which they belonged. Wearing Indian cultural clothing on an everyday basis is not the norm in Fiji, thus, it was not the norm to do so in Canada in Indo-Fijian culture as well. However, there are restrictions and limitations to what parents deem acceptable for a female Indo-Fijian immigrant to wear. Exposing too much skin, exposing bare midriffs, and tight clothes are not acceptable in Indo-Fijian culture. Because the current fashion trends at school were not acceptable at home, Annisha said that “I remember having to even go to school and changing how we dressed, you took stuff in your backpack or even your friends would bring it. I mean there was a limit to what I could wear. We were changing clothes and dressing differently then you would change it all back and come back home.” As noted by Lee (2005: 54) immigrant youths who want to be accepted by the dominant culture quickly learn that changing their clothes to fit the host culture aids them in belonging to that culture. By changing her clothes Annisha reveals that she was concerned with others reaction to her, so she changed her clothing at school because she was embracing Canadian culture and changed back to keep her family happy. Annisha changed her clothes to that of Canadian style because it was an expression of what she wanted and believed in. Since clothing is a cultural marker she changed at school because it was the domain in which she could express herself as a Canadian, but she changed back before she got home because it was what was expected of her. It should be noted, however, that out of the eight women I interviewed Annisha was the only one who admitted that she changed her appearance at school.



My informants acknowledged that it was important to them how others saw them in high school. Mamta stated that at school her behavior was in direct contrast to how she behaved at home. “ At school I was more you know the friend that was on the back burner, as bad as it sounds now, but kinda the follower. But when I got home I was kinda the life of the party. [To her parents] I would have this huge convoluted story about what we did [at school] and how in my eyes and my mind how it all played out, but really it was just different.” She stated that what actually happened at school was different from what she told her parents. At home she suggested that she was the “life of the party” and she made it sound to her parents that she was like that at school too, but in reality at school she was shy and tried to blend in. Mamta shared that she refrained from being the center of attention at school because she questioned if it was acceptable and normal in Canadian culture. She did not want to be out of place so she changed her natural outgoing behavior when at school.

Annisha, too, related that to fit in at school her behavior was different. In this case, she tried to find a group at school to fit in with, and since she recognized that there were not many other Indo-Fijians at her school, she had to create her own identity and try to be somebody who would fit in. As she put it, “I would say because you are trying to find a group to fit into which you didn’t have very much choice to and chance to get in so you kinda had to create your own or try to be somebody else.” On the other hand, as a result of attending a multicultural high school, Falisha, Maya, and Sameena concurred that they did not behave differently when at school. They did not feel different or like an outcast. Sameena even asserted that she was not treated differently at school by her peers, thus she did not have to behave differently around them or be conscious about her immigrant status. Maya also agreed that she did not consciously think her immigrant status made a difference in how she behaved at school.

The majority of the women I interviewed, with the exception of Sanita and Rosanna, presented socially and to an extent emotionally in their high school public life as Canadian. Sanita and Rosanna came to Canada at a later age, half way through high school, so they were not keen on the norms of Canadian youth culture or participating in events that other youths participated in at their school such as school dances, sports teams, or social clubs. Whereas the other immigrant women I interviewed socially presented themselves to be Canadian by participating in such activities. The women all tell that initially going to school dances, parties, and hanging out with friends on the weekend was always an issue with their parents. But they wanted to participate in activities that their peers did, and they began to adopt Canadian cultural norms for youths. They eventually started doing things such as attending school dances, having male friends, and having boyfriends without letting their parents know or getting them involved. With these actions they present themselves to be Canadian in their public life. I suggest that because their parents' and Indo-Fijian norms did not support such activities, these women covertly accepted and participated in these events as an outlet in which they could express their Canadian-ness.

In most places, the stigma that is attached by the dominant society to immigrants is unfavorable to immigrant self-identification. For young immigrants, it is in school where they realize that others see them as inferior. Those individuals who accept the fact that they are different based on their origins are also outsiders at school (Lee 2005:2). Because of this, female Indo-Fijian immigrants are determined to try and present themselves as Canadians. They do this by changing their persona and external appearances while hiding or keeping their Indo-Fijian ways of life to themselves. They adhere to Canadian norms and want to be part of the

Canadian culture. So they train and change themselves in some cases physically, behaviorally, and socially to fit in with Canadian societal expectations of youth.

### Language Strategies

The women I worked with wanted to be accepted by the dominant Canadian culture so they gravitated towards those norms and expectations. One good example is in language. In all cases they moved away from their native language towards the dominant language of the host country (English) in order to blend in and be accepted. This notion was very evident at the two Fijian festivals I attended. As I observed women who seemed to be teenagers or in their twenties I noted that most of these women only spoke English while at the festivals. The adults and elderly, on the other hand, spoke mostly Fijian Hindi. In most cases young women were around people their own age and the group would all be speaking in English and not in Fijian Hindi. In other cases women who were speaking to individuals older than themselves still spoke in English. The master of ceremonies though spoke in Fijian Hindi. This indicated that the officials of the festivals assumed that most people especially those of Indo-Fijian origins and decent knew, understood, and spoke Fijian Hindi, yet the women I observed still chose to speak in English.

Being born in Fiji, Fijian Hindi was my mother tongue. I grew up speaking Hindi with my family and other relatives. My parents were fluent in both Fijian Hindi and English and taught me both at a young age. When I immigrated to Canada I spoke and understood English. My family and I spent the first few months in Canada at my grandmother's house. There were multiple families; my aunts, uncles, and cousins were at my grandmother's house, and she insisted that we speak Fijian Hindi to her and in the house. I suggest this was because to her this

was a form of showing her respect. I also suggest that this was her attempt of trying to preserve Indo-Fijian culture as most of my cousins were in school and began to frequently speak English. I, too, began school and favored speaking English, either at home or school, and especially to those my own age. I was at ease with speaking English because I spent most of my day speaking it at school. I believe this is another form of accepting Canadian culture. However, my grandmother instilled this notion of language and how it equates with respect and that one should abide by this notion. For example, If I am speaking to an adult or an elderly person who is Indo-Fijian, I will only speak to them in Fijian Hindi.

The way that female Indo-Fijian immigrants refer to themselves also gives us indications of their personal identity. All of the informants mentioned that their Fijian heritage and culture was very important to them in terms of how it shaped their identity. They suggested that their Indo-Fijian roots played a large role in their upbringing and that retaining some of the beliefs and views that their parent's instilled in them shaped who they are today. Sameena said "I am proud of the way my parents brought me up. Now I can say I think I am a good person because of it." However, with that said, because of the restrictions in their private life, these women gravitated towards Canadian culture and the freedoms it offers. Today, these individuals do not present themselves as Fijian in their public life.

Although, most of the women I interviewed attempted to take elements of both their worlds and cultures and blend them they did not necessarily do so voluntarily. In other words, these women were being pulled by each culture to adhere to the expectations of that specific culture. As a result of this pulling back to one's culture of origin and a pushing towards the dominant culture a "new hybrid" emerges. Instead of becoming a "blended" person a new hybrid can be characterized as one who knows that she wants to be accepted by the dominant

culture, thus she accepts the host culture's norms and expectations. She wants to be given the right to make life choices as she sees other young people doing in the dominant society. However she also understands that this conflicts with her home cultural norms and expectations, thus in her private life she returns to her culture of origin to satisfy her family obligations. In this case study, the women I interviewed abided by their Fijian norms because it is what was expected of them by their families. They did so because it would cause less conflict in the home and it would make their family members happy. But in reality they were drawn to the Canadian culture which they could express in their public life because they found it provides for more freedom and independence. All of this means that they perform a balancing act, as they negotiate and maneuver their two worlds to keep harmony.

### The New Hybrid

When these women talk about their experiences attending school and growing up in Vancouver you can hear the tension in their responses when referring to the expectations of their home and private life. This tension was prevalent in six of the eight women I interviewed. The tension informs us about which culture they favored. When Annisha spoke about her experiences in her private life she was resentful that she did not have the same freedoms as others at school. She expressed that because of her strict parents she was not allowed to participate in school activities and socialize like she wanted to, consequently she said she did not remember a lot of good times. She expressed that disgracing her family was "a very big deal" and that is why she tolerated the rules and regulations set by her parents. Instead of being a hybrid, then, Annisha would be a new hybrid because she maintained her Fijian norms merely to

please her parents. She realized that it was what was expected of her and that she did not have a voice at home.

At school however, Annisha expressed what was not allowed or accepted at home. At school she was able to socialize, wear trendy clothing, and make her own decisions about friends, ideas and so on. At school, she considered herself free from her parents' expectations. She wanted to accept Canadian cultural norms; she began to think along the lines of these norms. For example, Annisha understood and acknowledged that at home she did things for others and not for herself. Most immigrant youths come to the host culture willing to help their family succeed by taking on responsibilities to alleviate pressures and stress for their parents. They think of how their actions may benefit the entire family (Lee 2005: 63; Suarez-Orozco and Todorova 2003: 34). However, Annisha felt much tension at being expected to do chores and abide by her parent's restrictions. She said that her home life offered "a lot of benefit for everyone else and not for myself." She understood that she did things for others rather than herself. However, to avoid conflict in the home she adhered to familial expectations and was being pulled by her Fijian family to become the "good Fijian daughter."

Sameena also accepted Canadian norms and exposed tensions when she spoke about the responsibilities she had in her private and home life. She was primarily concerned about gender equality, and she said she sought such equality but that it was not available for her at home. Sameena, too, is a new hybrid because she accepts the Canadian notions of gender equality and the freedoms it provides, yet she was unwillingly pulled back to her homeland culture by her parents. She, too, appeased her family. Although both of these women when asked about their nationality contended that they are Fijian, they acted like Canadians. They said they were proud to be Fijian and had not forgotten who they were.

Amina, too, said that she was proud to be Fijian and even acknowledged it in school, but she, too, moved towards an acceptance of Canadian culture. She kept her two worlds separate. At school she felt that she was herself, but when she got home she suggested that she changed who she was. She felt that she could not be the same person in both worlds because of how different the worlds were to her. At school she was outgoing and social in that she got along with everyone, but when she got home she said she had to be timid and quiet. She also commented that she did not fit in with her family because they were conservative. “It was overwhelming trying to fit in at home. My mom, my brother, and my sister got along and I was like why am I not getting along with them? It was really confusing.” Amina suggested that her home and family life were “boring” and that she moved towards her school and public life because it gave her freedom and excitement. She, too, is a new hybrid because she did not voluntarily maintain her Fijian roots, but was being pulled back to them by her strict mother. She adhered to her family’s expectations in order to avoid escalating the tension in the household. Being a new hybrid is further evidenced when she said that she considers herself a Canadian because of the freedom and how it allows her to be liberal. She contrasted this with the statement that remaining Fijian and accepting Fijian norms would lead her to be someone she is not.

Mamta, on the other hand, did not express resentment when talking about her experiences; but she questioned her identity and the different worlds and cultures to which she belonged. She admitted that she did not embrace her Fijian immigrant status at school, instead she tried to hide or deny it. Mamta, too, can be thought of as a new hybrid in that she embraced Canadian notions and expectations and she sought to abide by what is deemed acceptable in Canadian culture. She is a new hybrid because she expressed that she was two completely

different people at school and at home. She gravitated towards the Canadian culture because she accepts the tenets and all that she thinks it has to offer such as gender equality, freedom, and educational opportunities. She also admitted that she considers herself Canadian because she felt it was easier to be Canadian since people did not question that as much as they would if she said she were Fijian. As she stated “when I say that I am Canadian people don’t want to keep asking questions because its almost like they are prying on my identity if they keep asking me more questions, so it was just easier to [say that I was Canadian].” The new hybrid is further confirmed as when asked her identity and nationality today, Mamta states that she is Canadian and she is able to relate with Canadian culture because she has spent more time in Canada than in Fiji.

Falisha, too, can be characterized as a new hybrid because she drifts towards Canadian culture. She said that she listened to her parents and grandmother because it was what was expected of her and not necessarily because what they wanted were her expectations of life. She kept things hidden from her family such as male friends, dating, and who she was friends with because she realized that according to her family they were not the Fijian norm, but she did not see anything wrong with what she was doing. Today, Falisha says that she considers herself Canadian because she has been in Canada for most of her life and it is what she knows. Maya, too, expressed that she adhered to both Canadian culture and Fijian culture. According to Maya, her parents were very supportive of her Canadian choices, but she recognized what she deemed appropriate for her parents to know and what would not be acceptable to them. In this case, I suggest that Maya is a new hybrid because although she found certain behaviors such as attending sleep-overs, having male friends and a boyfriend, and attending school dances acceptable, she acknowledged that her parents did not. As a result, she chose not to divulge this



information. Maya chose to engage in such behaviors of which her parents disapproved, but she hid it from them, thus making her a new hybrid. Maya was being pulled to Fijian norms by her parents' views and expectations so in an attempt to please them she let them believe that she did not participate in such activities, which alleviated conflict in the home. However, she engaged in the activities, thus she obviously was accepting Canadian culture because it is what she wanted to do. She understood herself to have her own choice even though she had to hide it from her family. She felt that she had some freedoms in choosing her partner similar to other Canadian girls.

Although, I characterize Maya as a new hybrid because of these reasons, I acknowledge that she is the closest in this cohort to being a hybrid. She attempted to participate in activities and events of both cultures. In her words, “[I] still speak Hindi, [I] still eat Fijian food, [I] still watch the [Hindi] movies, [I] go to the festivals of Fijian people but I also do cultural things that are Canadian. I watch hockey I do things that are quintessentially Canadian.” In fact when asked about her nationality and identity she stated that she considered herself a Fijian-Canadian because she embodies elements of both cultures and does not know how to separate them. However it should be noted that her participation in Canadian culture that she willingly exposed to her parents were things that she knew would be accepted by them, hence still making her a new hybrid.

Rosanna and Sanita are the two women that I do not consider new hybrids because they stay very close to their Fijian roots. Sharir (2002: 15) and Walters, Phythian, and Anisef (2007: 53) have noted that the age of migration of an individual has an impact on a young person's identity. Both, Rosanna and Sanita migrated to Canada in their teens, thus they began high school in Fiji and finished in Canada. I do not consider Rosanna and Sanita neither hybrids or

new hybrids because they do not interconnect the two cultures and worlds they live in and they do not gravitate towards Canadian culture. They have maintained their Fijian norms and have never separated themselves from them. This is most likely because they immigrated to Canada at a very late stage, and they had already formed their identity. Walters et al. (2007: 53) state that if an individual migrated at a later stage in life, like Rosanna and Sanita, it is less likely that they will accept the dominant society's norms and expectations. Both women acknowledged that they consider themselves Fijian, that they are proud to be Fijian and that they spent more of their formative years growing up in Fiji than in Canada.

The notion of personal identity for immigrants is fundamental in understanding the particular experiences of growing up in Canada. The way that these women act and portray themselves at school and at home gives us insight to how they view themselves. In previous scholarship, it was generally thought that immigrant youth become hybrids of the cultures that they belong to. However, in this case of female Indo-Fijian immigrants, I do not find this to be true. Instead, I suggest that personal identity and acceptance of who one is and who one wanted to be is not so black and white. I suggest that hybridity is not necessarily always the outcome of immigrant youths. Rather, we must understand and hear what these women have been saying all along. Many, in fact, move towards their host culture because of the opportunities they see it provides, and they are reluctantly being pulled back to their Fijian culture by family obligations and expectations. Thus they become the new hybrid.

## VI: CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on first generation female Indo-Fijian youths and their experiences and personal journeys growing up in Canada. Primarily focusing on each individual's experiences of attending school in Vancouver, I have shown that adolescent Indo-Fijian females live in two different worlds. Through this I have characterized what the two worlds consists of in terms of their private home life and their public, school life. Being involved in two different worlds, my informants each acknowledged that there were different expectations and norms that were required of them in each world. As it has been demonstrated with these women's narratives, we begin to understand the personal experiences of growing up in Canada as an immigrant from Fiji. These experiences in turn have changed these immigrant women's personal identity and their way of life beyond high school.

The immigrant women in my study had to adjust to Canadian culture while simultaneously keeping satisfying the Indo-Fijian expectations of their families. As I have demonstrated these immigrant women have a lot to deal with regarding who they are, who they would like to be, society's notion of them, and their family's perception of them. These women present a noticeable gap between their parents' expectations of them and the expectations of them by the dominant society. The young women, then, have to negotiate two sets of expectations. However, as I have highlighted, this negotiation is influenced by external forces beyond their control. These forces include being a subject and victim to skin-color racism, being racialised by the dominant society, and being judged based on their immigrant status. As it is portrayed through interviews, these women, as racial minorities in Canada, face discrimination and prejudice based on their physical appearance and social customs. One's origin, race, skin

tone, and how others react to them were major contributors to these women's identity formation. These women inevitably had to form their self-identity around these factors, and, as we saw, these factors influenced how these individuals perceived themselves.

Despite the racial hierarchy in Canada, these women also see the freedoms and opportunities available in Canadian culture. In fact, the initial motivators for their parents to migrate were the freedom and openness they understood to be available in Canadian culture. School and public life were where my informants were able to act upon the freedom they yearned for in their private life. Freedom that these women sought in their public life were gender equality, being able to participate in school activities, and socializing with whom they choose. These women considered their public life enjoyable and exciting, and they felt that their private home life was filled with stipulations, expectations, and strict family rules based on Indo-Fijian cultural norms. As I have shown, immigrant parents have strict expectations of their daughters, especially. Parents expectations are seen as controlling by the immigrant youth in that parents oversee how their daughter should dress, behave, adhere to cultural norms, and educational aspirations. Because of the distinct expectations required from each culture it caused these women to negotiate and attempt to balance their two worlds.

The common notion in immigrant studies is that when immigrant youth are between two worlds the outcome is a hybrid identity. The rationale is that immigrant youths become hybrids of the different cultures they are involved in as a reaction to the division that results from being pulled in opposing directions. To offset this pulling, youths incorporate and combine the two or more cultures that they are involved with by taking elements from each culture and integrating them into their day-to-day lives and identity. This is hybridity. However, I argue that female Indo-Fijian immigrants effort to balance and blend the two worlds only becomes more

convoluted and complex. So, a hybrid identity is not necessarily the only outcome when an immigrant youth is involved in two or more cultures. As this work demonstrates one outcome is a new hybrid. A new hybrid does not adhere to expectations of each culture in a voluntary blending. Instead they want to lighten conflicts and problems in each of the cultures that they belong to, and they do so by appeasing some people and accepting other cultural norms. Because these women saw that their public life provided them with openness and freedoms compared to their private life, they essentially took part in Canadian expectations and norms. They willingly abided by Canadian cultural norms because of what they thought it offered, and they were able to participate in activities that were not deemed acceptable in Indo-Fijian culture. However these individuals realized that their actions in their public life and Canadian culture could not be transferred in to their private life and Indo-Fijian culture, thus the new hybrid emerges. But, the new hybrid retains Indo-Fijian cultural traits not voluntarily. Rather she is pulled by her cultural obligations and family members. She adheres to her family's expectations of her and she acknowledges that if she does not it would create conflict within the home. She is attracted to Canadian culture, while at the same time being pulled back to her Indo-Fijian culture. Thus, essentially, she is constantly negotiating her identity within these constructs. Thus I suggest that with the example from this cohort that first generation female Indo-Fijian immigrants are not hybrids because they do not combine both cultures, rather they keep them separate. Thus, they are new hybrids.

These women as racial minorities in Canada experienced discrimination and prejudice because of their physical appearance. The color of a person's skin is a visible identity marker for the women in this study, which informs their difference from the dominant society. As a result

of the racism that these women encountered they were required to negotiate their identity within a racial hierarchy which placed them at the bottom.

I also now realize how race and racism have played a vital role in immigrant experiences and identity formation. Before I started this research I did not take much consideration to this notion, but in doing the interviews I was surprised to see how this issue was so fundamental to creating specific identities and experiences. I realized this to be true in my own life as I reflected and thought hard about my own past.

As a native ethnographer this research has allowed me to place myself in the study. I integrated my own accounts and experiences of growing up as an immigrant in Canada with other individuals in the ethnography which allowed me to gain specific insights of the setting and the people I was researching. I believe my personal experiences have influenced what I discuss in this thesis. I concentrate primarily on past experiences of an immigrant in high school and their formative years because, to me, these were trying years of growing up, and I wanted to see if other Indo-Fijian women had similar experiences. I came into this research understanding that Indo-Fijian immigrant youth lived in two worlds, the public and the private, which is why I wanted to address this issue of two worlds. However, as I was coding and writing I realized that it was not a simple matter to discuss. Although these women did in fact live in two worlds there was more to it. These women were not just hybrids of their cultures, rather there are more considerations that needed to be addressed when speaking about their self identity and that there was more to the hybrid discussion than previously thought. These women all along have been saying, “yes we are Fijian but we are also Canadian,” and this is supported by their behavior.

There are many more questions that need to be addressed to gather a full understanding of Indo-Fijian immigrants experiences and the idea of a new hybridity. For example, does religion have an influence on specific experiences and if so, how? The different experiences of first generation and second generation immigrant youth is also an interesting question that needs further exploration. Also one could consider the differences between the male experiences and the female experiences. In addition, could this new hybridity result from the experiences of being an adolescent and a yearning to fit in, and if so, does it transform into hybridity or a blending of both cultures, with age and maturity?

Studying one's own culture in this case has provided me with answers and conclusions about being an Indo-Fijian immigrant growing up in Canada that I would not have had a chance to acknowledge without the opportunity of conducting this research. Not only have I provided the general public with answers about female Indo-Fijian immigrants growing up in Canada which is lacking in literature I have also provided myself with answers about myself and my own upbringing.



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## Appendix A- Interview Guide

How old are you?

What are you doing now? Are you working or schooling?

How old were you when you came to Canada from Fiji?

As an immigrant, what was high school like for you?

-Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

-Can you tell me about your friends? Who did you hang out with?

-How were your teacher relationships? Did you get along with them?

Did you have any responsibilities at school?

-If so, can you share?

Can you tell me about your home and family life during your high school years?

-Any siblings?

-Did your parents work?

Did you have any responsibilities at home?

-What were they?

In high school what did it mean to you to be a Fijian immigrant?

Did being an immigrant make you feel different in high school?

-How?

-Why?

How did people at school treat you?

-Did they treat you differently?

Was how you were treated at school different from when you got home?

-Was it different when you got home?

Did your parents and other family members expect you to abide by Fijian cultural norms at home?

-What were they, if they did?

-Did you consider yourself free like other Canadian girls at school?

-Were you allowed to participate in the same activities as them?



Did you intentionally separate your high school public life from that of your home and family life?

-If yes, how did you do that?

-If no, how did you blend them?

As a high school student did this separation/blend pose any difficulties for you?

-If yes, can you share?

-If no, what made it easy if at all for you?

What would you say your nationality is today?

-Would you consider yourself Canadian or Fijian?

-Why?

# VITA

## **EDUCATION:**

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**Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. October, 2007**  
**Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology**

**Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Richmond, B.C. May, 2006**  
**General Studies**

**Gladstone Secondary School, Vancouver, B.C. June, 2002**

## **FIELD WORK & RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:**

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**Independent Study/ Thesis Research. Summer, 2010**  
**Vancouver, British Columbia.**

**Project Supervisor: Dr. Robbie Ethridge**

- **Conducted eight semi-structured interviews with first generation Fijian Women**
- **Acquired in-depth information from the eight interviews**
- **Collected original data for a master's thesis**
- **Participated in participant observation at two different Fijian festivals in Vancouver**
- **Transcribed interviews from a tape recorder**

**Independent Study. Spring, 2007**

**Burnaby, British Columbia**

**Project Supervisor: Dr. Christine Allen**

- **Conducted interviews on adolescent immigrant females**
- **Took rigorous field notes while engaged in conversation with my informants**
- **Obtained original data which was the basis of my mini-ethnography on immigrant females and their struggles**
- **Conducted an intensive study of immigrant females, culminating in a research paper and PowerPoint presentation**

## **LANGUAGES:**

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- **English: Fluent**
- **Hindi: Conversational**
- **Fijian Hindi: Conversational**
- **Punjabi: Conversational**
- **Urdu: Conversational**

## **PRESENTATIONS:**

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### **Doing Business With Beauty**

**Fall, 2009**

**University of Mississippi  
Interactive Oral Presentation**

- **Conducted a two hour presentation on gender and its effects on doing business**
- **Required class participation**
- **Facilitated question and comments**
- **Purpose of the study was to examine the book written by Adia Harvey Wingfield. To acknowledge how certain businesses are gendered.**

### **Female Genital Cutting: A Gendered Practice**

**Fall, 2009**

**University of Mississippi  
Oral Presentation**

- **Reflected on the results of an independent study on Female genital cutting and the circumstances in which the practice is embedded in around the world.**

### **Balancing Different Worlds**

**Spring, 2007**

**Simon Fraser University  
PowerPoint Presentation**

- **Presented on original data collected through field research on immigrant females and their experiences growing up in Canada.**

## **SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS:**

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- **Teaching Assistantship, The University of Mississippi** **2009-2011**
  - **British Columbia Human Rights Champion** **2002**
  - **Passport to Education** **2000-2002**  
**Awarded for academic excellence**
  - **Hortense J. Warne Scholarship** **2002**  
**Awarded for outstanding achievement in citizenship, scholarship and athletic service to a Gladstone Secondary high school graduate attending a post secondary institution.**
  - **Shelly Wong Memorial Scholarship** **2002**  
**Awarded for most outstanding fine arts student to a Gladstone Secondary high school graduate attending a post secondary institution.**
  - **Students' Council Scholarship** **2002**  
**Awarded to a member of Gladstone Secondary's students' council graduate attending a post secondary institution.**
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**SKILLS:**

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- **Technical: Working knowledge of both Windows-based and Macintosh computers; Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Photoshop.**