

LOOKING BACKWARD, MOVING FORWARD:
THE EXPERIENCES OF INDO-FIJIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA

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Ambrita Nand

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by

Ambrita Nand

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2015

Dr. Chuck Darrah Department of Anthropology

Dr. James Freeman Department of Anthropology

Dr. Roberto Gonzalez Department of Anthropology

ABSTRACT

LOOKING BACKWARD, MOVING FORWARD: THE EXPERIENCES OF INDO-FIJIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA

This study helps address gaps in knowledge concerning the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women in California and offers a space for their voices to be heard. The subsequent chapters investigate the lives of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women and their experiences upon migrating to Modesto, California. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through participant-observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews and informal conversations. The data are presented as anthropological silhouettes, a form of life-writing (the recording of events and experiences of a life), which explores each individual woman's experience with life in Fiji to her eventual migration and transition to life in California. The study reveals heterogeneity amongst the women's experiences and perspectives as well as commonalities that arise in their collective experiences as Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in the city of Modesto. Overall, the anthropological silhouettes reveal that migration has led to shifts in the women's identities and their prescribed gender roles. Furthermore, despite some of the challenges that came with immigrating, the women have experienced social, political and economic mobility since arriving to California. All five women have accepted the United States as their adopted homeland, and as a result, have no plans of re-migrating to Fiji.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nestled in the South Pacific between the equator and the tropic of Capricorn, a vast archipelago of more than 330 islands forms the breathtaking nation of Fiji. With postcard-perfect scenery, pristine white sand beaches and friendly locals, this island paradise attracts an impressive number of visitors each year. Ironically, while tourists arrive to Fiji, many of those born on native Fijian soil have been coerced from their country of birth. However, those coerced from Fiji are not the typical faces found on the travel brochures and Internet sites for the nation. Instead, those who have departed represent the lesser-known segment of Fiji's segregated plural society, the Indo-Fijians. The Indo-Fijians are the direct descendants of the *girmitiyas*, or indentured laborers from India, who first arrived to Fiji in 1879 to work for the sugar industry.

Since the arrival of the *girmitiyas*, Indo-Fijians have struggled through unremitting social, political and economic marginalization in Fiji. Not only did the community bear through 37 years of indenture, Indo-Fijians were also victimized during Fiji's four military coups. The coups generated countless human rights violations against Indo-Fijians, leading to their eventual exodus to four main overseas destinations including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America (B. Lal 2003). Since their departure from Fiji, little research has been conducted on Indo-Fijians in their new host societies. At present, only three serious studies on Indo-Fijian immigrants exist. They include Norman Buchignani's (1980) study of Indo-Fijians in

Canada, Carmen Voigt-Graf's (2001) study of Indo-Fijians in Australia, and Monica Devi's (2012) study on Indo-Fijians in California's East Bay.

Coupled with the lack of knowledge on Indo-Fijian immigrants, Indo-Fijian women constitute one of Fiji's most vulnerable groups, one that has endured the highest levels of marginalization not only because of their ethnicity but also their gender. The marginalization of Fiji's Indian women has been documented since the indentured period. The rare collection of literature on these women depicts them as docile, inferior, powerless, promiscuous, and victims of both physical and sexual violence. Understanding these women's predicaments is truly difficult because as Indo-Fijian historian Brij Lal (1985) explains, their voices are "absent in the written records, where for the most part, their faces are shrouded by a veil of dishonor drawn *by men*" (1985:142). Shireen Lateef (1987), a noted Indo-Fijian anthropologist, also comments on the androcentric biases surrounding the lives of these women:

The vast majority of commentaries mostly written by men, are imbued with derogatory comments about [Fiji's Indian indentured] women. Few have bothered to discuss in any detail women's working conditions or attempted to analyze indentured women's lives from a perspective other than a male centered one. This bias pervades much of the historical data. (1987:4)

Regrettably, the lack of Indo-Fijian women's voices persists today, not to mention an overall lack of knowledge about their lives in Fiji or of those living abroad. Indo-Fijian women continue to remain largely invisible and silent in Fiji as well as in their new host societies.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Due to the lack of research on Indo-Fijian immigrants in their native environment as well as in their new host societies, combined with the severe underrepresentation of Indo-Fijian women's voices and perspectives throughout Fiji's history, I attempt to contribute in filling these gaps in knowledge by exploring the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women in the United States. Thus, the study has two objectives; the first is to provide a space for Indo-Fijian women's voices to be heard, while the second objective is to learn about the gendered experience of Indo-Fijian emigration to the United States. Due to the growing Indo-Fijian diaspora in Modesto, California, the city provides a good place to start exploring the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women in the United States. With various Indo-Fijian shops, temples and cultural associations around Modesto, the city has allowed the community to flourish and preserve their unique cultural heritage.

Using a qualitative research approach, I investigated the experiences of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women by learning about their lives in Fiji and their eventual migration and transition to life in Modesto, California. Data for the study were collected through the means of participant observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews and informal conversations. The data are then presented in the form of anthropological silhouettes, a form of life-writing (the recording of events and experiences of a life), which allowed for exploring both the individual and collective experiences and perspectives of the women. The anthropological silhouettes provide a glimpse into the women's lives prior to migration and after migration, showcasing both differences and commonalities amongst their experiences and perspectives. Ultimately, this research makes important

contributions to the study of Indo-Fijian emigration to the United States while providing a space for Indo-Fijian women's voices to be heard.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter introduces the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 2 provides a historical context to Fiji's Indo-Fijian community. The objective of this chapter is to acquaint readers to the geneses of the Indo-Fijian identity as well as the social, political and economic history of the Fiji Islands. By having this knowledge, one can begin to understand the factors that directly and indirectly shaped the lives of the women in the study and led to their eventual migration to California. Chapter 3 provides a discussion on the methodology utilized for the study. Specifically, this chapter details the framework that guided the study, the selection of participants, methods for data collection and analysis, and limitations of the methodology. Next, chapter 4 presents the anthropological silhouettes, which chronicle the lives of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California who appear under the pseudonyms Krishna, Malti, Priya, Asha, and Sheela. Finally, chapter 5 provides a discussion of the themes that emerged from the anthropological silhouettes as well as the implications and contributions of the study.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

Introduction

To better understand the experiences of the women in the study, it is first important to consider the larger historical context of Fiji, their native birthplace. Thus, this chapter introduces the origins of the Indo-Fijian identity as well as the social, political and economic factors in Fiji that directly and indirectly shaped their lives and led to their eventual migration to California. This chapter also exposes the limited knowledge concerning the lives of Indo-Fijian women and their vulnerability throughout Fiji's history.

To enhance readability, this chapter is divided into four parts. First, part 1 details European contact and colonization, contracting Indians to Fiji, and the origins of the laborers. Next, part 2 focuses on the indentured period, 1879-1919, and reviews plantation life, the plight of the laborers, and the eventual abolition of the indentured contract. Part 3 examines the post-indenture years and Indo-Fijian efforts for social, political and economic representation in Fiji. Finally, part 4 focuses on Fiji's four military coups, Indo-Fijian emigration, the years after the coups, and Fiji's current situation.

Part 1: Fiji's Colonization

European Contact and Colonization

The picturesque scenery of Fiji and its lush environment have attracted settlers from near and afar for centuries. The original inhabitants of Fiji are said to have arrived approximately 3,500 years ago from the islands of Melanesia (Devi 2012:13). Besides

the original inhabitants whose descendants are now considered the indigenous people of Fiji, Europeans also journeyed to the islands. The earliest mention of European contact in Fiji was in 1643 when Dutch explorer Abel Adam sighted the archipelago. Since then, European contact was amplified upon the discovery of sandalwood (1800-1814), a fragrant wood used to barter with the Chinese, and with the sea cucumber trade, which lasted from the 1820s to the 1850s (B. Lal 1992:9). However, it was the discovery that Fiji provided the ideal environment for growing sugar cane that led Europeans to stay on the islands. British traveler H. Stonehewer Cooper (1879) describes in his manuscript *Fiji and its Prospects* the potential for the crop in Fiji:

Among tropical products the cultivation of the sugar cane, for the manufacture of sugar, Fiji holds a prominent place. Every visitor to Fiji (even from countries in which the sugar cane is the only plant cultivated in any extent) cannot fail being struck with the size, the healthy appearance and the rapidity of growth of the sugar cane in Fiji . . . By the foregoing it will be noted that the climate of Fiji is by nature well adapted for growing the sugar cane, and so is the soil . . . The extent and richness of these lands in conjunction with a climate extremely favorable for growing and maturing the sugar cane, ought to make all well-wishers of Fiji long for the time when sugar will be made in and *exported by the hundred thousands tons, and to the value of millions of pounds sterling.* (1879:14-15)

With the vision of high profits, the British government quickly grasped control of the islands, and on October 10, 1874, Chief Cakobau agreed to the “Deed of Cession,” which placed Fiji under British colonial rule (Mayer 1963:8). Under the leadership of Sir Arthur Gordon, Fiji’s first governor, various policies were designed including that land remain under Fijian ownership and that indigenous Fijians be exempt from participating in the sugar plantation economy itself. Also, the British Crown developed a separate Fijian administration, which allowed them to govern the indigenous Fijians indirectly

(Premdas 1995:10-12). In addition to these policies, strict segregation of laborers from the indigenous Fijian population was imposed. It was by no accident that the two groups were separated: It was merely the colonial strategy of “divide-and-rule” that allowed the British to maintain control in Fiji.

Contracting Indian Laborers to Fiji

With the exemption of indigenous Fijians from participating in the sugar industry, a viable workforce was needed in Fiji. Former governor of Mauritius and Trinidad, Sir Arthur Gordon, who had witnessed the success of contracting laborers from India, suggested contracting Indian laborers for Fiji’s sugar plantations. His recommendation led to the arrangements of an indentured contract or *girmit* (agreement in English) for Fiji, which harnessed laborers to five years of work related to the cultivation and manufacturing of agricultural goods. Laborers were required to work nine hours on the weekday, and five hours on Saturday, with Sundays and holidays off (Lal 2004a:6). And if laborers continued on for an additional five years, they were offered a free passage back to India. However, the indentured system would become highly unpopular with a re-indenturing rate of 5 percent (Gillion 1962).

On May 15, 1879, 463 *girmitiyas* arrived aboard the *Leonidas* to the island of Viti Levu (Nicole 2011:101). With 87 voyages from 1879 to 1916, a total of 60,965 indentured Indians eventually arrived at Fiji. Approximately 13,696 of these laborers were female, and overall there were unequal ratios of women to men; for every 40 women, there were 100 men (Lateef 1987:1). Nearly 80 percent of the laborers were from North India, particularly from the United Provinces (B. Lal 2004b:56). However,

most recruits were from the settled plains district of Bihar, while a small number of laborers came from the Central Provinces, Punjab, and Madras (B. Lal 2004b:51-52). Also, the laborers represented a “fair cross-section of Indian rural society” and over 260 social groups consisting of Hindu castes/sub-castes, Muslims, and tribal groups entered Fiji, with nearly 80 percent identifying as Hindus (B. Lal 2004b:99). While men made up the majority of the recruits, women, children and entire families also made the journey across the *kala panis* or the dark waters as the *girmitiyas* dubbed it (B. Lal 1998).

The majority of the laborers worked for the Colonial Sugar Refining (CSR) Company of Sydney, with their first mill established along the Rewa River in Nausori. Later, more mills were established across the island of Viti Levu in Ba, Lautoka and Penang (Gillion 1956:139). While plantation owners made ample profits as predicted by Stonehewer (1879), the laborers were under-compensated and over-worked by their employers. Indentured men received one shilling per day while women earned only nine pennies a day (B. Lal 2012:182).

Various factors contributed to the emigration of Indians including the lack of employment, extreme poverty, droughts and famines in India (B. Lal 1983:55, 62). Although these were some of the push factors that led many Indians to migrate to Fiji, others arrived under false pretenses; Indians were often enticed with propaganda. An Indian laborer named Totaram Sanadhya described in his rare account *My 21 Years in Fiji* how numerous Indians, like himself, were deceived and taken to Fiji:

The *arkati* (recruiter) explained things to people there [in the half-way house], ‘Look brothers, the place you will work you will never have to suffer any sorrows. There will never be any problems there. You will eat

a lot of bananas and a stomach-full of sugar cane, and play flutes [symbolic of Lord Krishna] in relaxation.’ (Totaram 1991:34)

Alluding to the false image of a carefree life as exquisite as that of Lord Krishna was difficult for some to resist. When fabricated stories did not work, recruiters resorted to more coercive measures. For example, historian Adrian Mayer (1963) describes in *Indians in Fiji* the difficulties of recruiting laborers such as women:

It was difficult to persuade married women to emigrate, however; and when the recruiters would not fill their quotas with such willing emigrants as widows and destitutes, for whom a life in Fiji promised a fresh start, they resorted to trickery and abduction. The recruitment of women, in fact, was even less of a ‘free contract’ than that of men, and the proportion of women was barely maintained. (1963:14)

Nonetheless, those who never intended on setting foot in Fiji would find themselves in the most precarious situation.

Part 2: Indentured Period

Plantation Life and the Plight of Indian Laborers

Plantation life was treacherous for the Indian laborers, and Fiji quickly became referred to as *narak*, the Hindi word for “hell” (B. Lal 2004a:87). The *girmitiyas* lived in deplorable, cramped living conditions called plantation lines, which usually consisted of eight small rooms on each side. The rooms were a minuscule ten feet by seven (after 1908 it was increased to ten by twelve feet), where three single men were assigned to one of the rooms or one man, a woman, and no more than two children to a room (Ali 1977:1783). With no doors or windows, the cramped quarters of the plantation also lacked proper ventilation (Ali 1977:1783). The closed and confined spaces of the plantation lines led to the proliferation of illnesses and diseases amongst the laborers.

Sores, ulcers, yaw, dysentery and tuberculosis quickly spread from one laborer to another (Ali 1977:1783). Although medical care was included in the indentured contract, the quality of care was poor. Laborers were often taken to unsanitary hospitals led by uncertified European doctors (Gillion 1962:106). Laborers were also severely malnourished; their diet became known as the “scurvy diet” for its lack of nutrition. For the first six months of their stay, food was rationed, and after six months, laborers were required to find their own food. The meager wages earned by the laborers were used to pay for the rations (a fourpence was deducted from their wage for each ration), which were distributed weekly. Eventually, rations were increased, which was necessary for the back-breaking work of the sugar industry (Gillion 1962:105-106). But to make matters worse, plantation owners often disregarded the nine-hour workday and overseers and plantation owners’ systematically overtasked laborers, making it difficult for laborers to earn their pay without also having to work longer hours than stated in the Immigration Ordinance (Gillion 1962:110).

But the plight of the laborers was felt most through the systematic abuse and violence they endured. Indian laborers were often struck and beaten by plantation overseers. As for women laborers, they not only faced physical violence but sexual abuse. The disproportionate ratio of women to men made the indentured women easy targets for abuse by both their colonial masters and by indentured men. Between 1890 and 1919, it was reported that 68 indentured women were murdered in Fiji (Hyam 1990:94). According to Brij Lal (2001), sexual jealousy was perceived as the culprit behind the murders:

Indian indentured women thus stood accused in the eyes of their own community as well as those of the official world, carrying the double backpack of racism and sexism. The widely held, though empirically unsupported, perception of them as morally lax, profligate individuals made the women an easy target for malicious gossip and innuendoes. More seriously, it gave the *sirdars* (Indian foremen) and overseers the license to treat women with little respect and to view them simply as objects of sexual gratification. Not surprisingly, the indentured women also became convenient scapegoats for all the ill of the indentured system. (2001:198-199)

The double burden of being Indian and a woman took its toll on the lives of indentured women.

Eventually, the plight of the laborers led to high rates of suicide amongst the indentured Indians. In fact, Fiji had the highest suicide rates in all of the indentured colonies (Lal 1993:187). Totaram Sanadhya revealed some of the motives that led the laborers to take their own lives:

Overseers commit outrages against us whenever they like. Many of our brothers there [Fiji] make a noose and hang themselves, from fear of hard work, and from fears of jail, and the blows of the overseers. Not many days ago several Madrasis at a plantation in Navua hanged themselves for this reason. (Nicole 2011:163)

Robert Nicole further elaborates in his book *Disturbing History: Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji* that “the combination of fear, pain, displacement, hopelessness and helplessness created a profoundly alienating situation that in some circumstances made death more attractive than life” (Nicole 2011:164). Disturbingly, Fiji’s high suicide rate continues today at endemic levels with the majority of the victims being young Indo-Fijian women (Radio Australia 2012).

Cultural Fragmentation and the Birth of the Indo-Fijian Identity

The culture and traditions that the laborers brought with them from India faced major transformation in Fiji. According to Brij Lal (2004a), “in that new environment [Fiji], old habits, patterns of thought and association, and understanding about their world and their place were shaken” (2004a:12). The patterns and process of change can be best illustrated by examining the caste system, marriage and gender relations amongst the laborers. Perhaps, the greatest and most evident change for the *girmitiyas* was the disintegration of the caste system, which had lost its practical relevance in the everyday life of the migrants (B. Lal 2004a:12). Regardless of their caste position, laborers were made to live, eat and sleep within the same quarters. Each laborer was *individually* contracted to the plantation, and their pay was based on the amount of work he or she accomplished, rather than according to social status (B. Lal 2004a:12). Even if the laborers wanted to sustain the caste system in Fiji, they could not as they lacked the cultural resources to do so. The disintegration of the caste system was advantageous to the lower caste Indians who became equals to their higher caste counterparts. According to Subramani (1979), “While indentured enslaved the Indian laborer, it also, paradoxically, released him from an old, static order . . . it was the first stage in the transformation of the feudal Indian into an individual” (1979:x).

The institution of marriage also underwent drastic changes during indenture. For both Hindus and Muslims alike, marriages traditionally “took place within a narrow, restricted circle prescribed by customs.” This, however, could not be preserved due to the lack of women in Fiji (B. Lal 2004a:13). Instead, the disproportionate sex ratio led to

inter-caste and cross-caste marriages. The institution of marriage was also further complicated since colonial law failed to recognize Hindu and Muslim marriages as illegitimate. This discrepancy led to the exploitation of women. For example, some indentured men agreed to their wives providing sexual services to a small number of men for a fee. Also, some fathers were known to sell their daughters (B. Lal 2004a:13). Overall, the plantation system undermined a *stable* family life, but marriages continued and families were still raised (B. Lal 2004a:14). Brij Lal (2004a) states, “The symbolic importance and comforting effect of the family during a time of turmoil in the life of the community cannot be overstated” (2004a:14). Although not well understood, families played an important role in the lives of the *girmitiyas* and their descendants.

In terms of gender relations amongst the indentured laborers, women occupied a marginal position. Their male counterparts blamed them for murders, suicides, and even the high infant mortality rate. Some indentured men viewed indentured women as a “temporary convenience to be discarded on returning to India” (B. Lal 2004a:14). Furthermore, men assessed women’s roles on the plantation in stereotypes. For instance, Brij Lal (2004a) explains:

Some men measured them [women] against the ideal of Sita, the paragon of Hindu womanhood, who gave up everything to accompany her husband, lord Rama into exile. The ideal Indian woman accepted her fate without complaint, glorified the virtues of motherhood, deferred to male authority, and above all, worshipped her husband. On the plantations, men sought to reassert the patriarchal structure of agrarian Indian society. (2004a:14)

Thus, patriarchy was reinstated and functioned amongst the Indian community in Fiji, which still functions today.

Moreover, the languages, cultural and religious practices that the laborers brought with them from India were also altered. For example, the various Hindi dialects of the laborers, in combination with Fijian and English, resulted in a unique dialect called Fiji Hindi or “Fiji Baat” (Mangubhai and Mugler 2006:32-33); it is the primary language still spoken by the majority of Indo-Fijians in Fiji. Furthermore, since the majority of the laborers had little to no experience in the practice of Brahmanical Hinduism in India, many traditional ceremonies were not observed in Fiji. Others, however, such as *Diwali* and *Holi* continued but in simplified versions, while plays based on sacred texts such as the *Ramayana* were also reenacted. In fact, the *Ramayana* became the most sacred text amongst the Indo-Fijians Hindus because of its core themes of exile, suffering, struggle and eventual return (Voigt-Graf 2008:88). Moreover, Indian foods, spices, music and clothing were also revived in Fiji and flourished with the arrival of Gujarati and Punjabis entrepreneurs (Voigt-Graf 2008:89). Nevertheless, the result of the fragmentation led to the eventual birth of a distinct hybrid identity (Bhabha 1994, Gilroy 1993, Gounder 2011:37-38), the Indo-Fijian identity.

The Abolition of the Indentured System

The molestation and abuse of indentured women provided a catalyst for the abolition of the indentured system in Fiji. One event in particular, concerning a 21-year-old indentured woman named Kunti, received special attention in both Fiji and India. In 1908, Kunti migrated from Lakhanpur village in Gorakhpur, India to Fiji with her husband to work on the sugar cane plantations. On April 10, 1913, Kunti was sent to work in an isolated banana field where an overseer approached her. The overseer

attempted to rape Kunti, but she resisted him and ran towards a river. Out of desperation, Kunti jumped into the river but was quickly rescued by an Indo-Fijian boy. Kunti's story received significant attention in India after being published in the national Indian newspaper the *Bharat Mitra* (B. Lal 1985:55-57). Also gaining wide attention was a violent incident against an indentured woman named Naraini, who was asked by an overseer to return to work only three days after giving birth to a dead child. After refusing to come to work, Naraini was beaten by the overseer to the point of unconsciousness. The incident made its way to Fiji's Supreme Court, but the overseer was found innocent (B. Lal 2004b:129).

The plight of indentured women could not be hidden. According to European missionary Miss Hannah Dudley, their quandaries were engraved on their faces:

Life on the plantations alters their demeanor and even their very faces. Some look crushed and broken-hearted, other sullen, others hard and evil. I shall never forget the first time I saw indenture women when they were returning from a day of work. The look on those women's faces haunts me. (Nicole 2011:200)

It was more than apparent that life as an indentured servant in Fiji was a life full of sorrow, pain and suffering. In 1914, Indian activist Mahatma Gandhi sent British missionary C.F. Andrew to investigate the indentured system in Fiji. After discovering the inhumane treatment of Indian laborers, Andrew and his colleague W.W. Pearson devised a report and called for the immediate abolition of the indentured system in Fiji (Mayer 1963:21). They wrote:

We cannot forget our first sight of the coolie 'lines' in Fiji. The looks on the faces of those men and the women alike told one unmistakable tale of vice. The sight of young children in such surroundings was unbearable to us. And again and again . . . we saw the same unmistakable look. It told

us of a moral disease which was eating into their heart and life of the people. (Nicole 2011:173)

In Fiji, and in other sugar colonies, it was evident that there was little difference between indentured servitude and slavery (Tinker 1974). So, on January 2, 1920, the remaining contracts were withdrawn and the indentured system abolished (Mayer 21:1963). Still, a cheap labor supply was needed in Fiji. As a result, the colonial government encouraged Indo-Fijians to remain in Fiji as free settlers. Of the 60,696 indentured laborers that arrived to Fiji, only 24,000 eventually returned to India (B. Lal 1998:2). B. Lal (1998) further elaborates on Indian settlement in Fiji:

The majority stayed on [in Fiji], trapped by the promise of a better life, dread of a long journey, the fear of rejection by family and friends of those who had broken caste taboos, and by the encouragement of a government keen to develop a local pool of labor supply. Time passed and memories of India faded as people formed new, cross-caste relationships and developed new attachments to their adopted homeland. (1998: 2)

With no immediate efforts by the colonial government to repatriate the laborers, Indo-Fijians adopted Fiji as their new homeland and began the long process of healing and uplifting a community that endured through the 37-year period of indenture in Fiji.

Part 3: Post-Indentured Years

Seeking Social, Political and Economic Representation in Fiji

With the cancellation of the indentured contract and a substantial community to accommodate, Indo-Fijians began seeking social, political and economic representation in Fiji. While the majority of Indo-Fijians continued as cane growers, either as independent farmers or tenants of CSR (B. Lal 1992:75), others began finding employment outside the sugar industry. As for Indo-Fijian women, their life drastically

changed. Instead of working for the sugar industry, they were confined to the home. This was difficult for the women who had lost their independent incomes. Indo-Fijian women had no choice but to marry Indo-Fijian men who had acquired land through leases from indigenous Fijians (Lateef 1987:5). Despite the cancellation of the contract, economic inequality and social discrimination continued against the Indo-Fijian community. Indo-Fijian activists began advocating for change through forms of nonviolent resistance. For example, on January 15, 1920, a group of Indo-Fijians employed at Suva's Public Works Department walked off their job demanding an increase in their wages and the same benefits offered to their Fijian and European counterparts. After hearing news about the strike, Indo-Fijian employees in Rewa also left their jobs. The strike lasted two months until an innocent Indo-Fijian activist was killed by a police officer (B. Lal 1992:81).

Although Indo-Fijians were met with resistance, they continued to advocate for the betterment of their community. For instance, in 1921 a group of Indo-Fijians held a sugar strike in Western Viti Levu. This time, Indo-Fijian tenants of the CSR estates demanded "better wages, specified work hours, adequate housing, medical and pension benefits, educational facilities for their children, and a small plot of land in which they could keep milk cows" (B. Lal 1992:82). To little surprise, CSR refused to cooperate and officers were called to intimidate the Indo-Fijian farmers (B. Lal 1992:82).

As resistance through strikes and other forms of non-violent protest continued, the community also worked towards other goals such as non-communal voting (Trkna 2008:34). The Indo-Fijians continued to face opposition for their efforts towards social equality and justice in Fiji. In 1923, a group of Europeans residing in Fiji declared they

“will resist, and will also encourage the native Fijians to resist with all means at their disposal, the contemplated attempt to admit Indian residents of Fiji to be the body of politic or to granting them any measure- however small- of political status” (B. Lal 1992:87). Pitting indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians against one another, European colonists sought to exclude Indo-Fijians from participating in the government. However, the resilient Indo-Fijian community began organizing themselves prior to the post-indentured era. For example, religious, social and political organizations such as the Arya Samaj, Sangama TISI, and Sanatam Dharm united Indo-Fijians in their efforts to uplift the community. They made significant contributions to the social, political and cultural growth of the community (Voigt-Graf 2010:1112-1113). For instance, the Arya Samaj, Sangama TISI, and Sanatam Dharm opened schools for Indo-Fijians. (B. Lal 1992:159). They understood that education was a vehicle for escaping poverty (Nicole 2011:178, 181).

Land Issues

To truly secure their future progress in Fiji, Indo-Fijians focused a great deal of attention on issues regarding land tenure. With over 83 percent of land belonging to indigenous Fijians and the rest to the British Crown, Indo-Fijians remained landless in Fiji. After the cancellation of the indentured contract, unused native land was leased to farmers since it could not be sold privately, but the leases were often short-term and non-renewable. But, in the late 1960s and 1970s, the Indo-Fijian community was temporarily subdued when land leases were increased to thirty years (B. Lal 2003). These leases began expiring in 1997 and issues concerning land tenure resurfaced at the turn of the

century as indigenous Fijians refused renewal of land leases to their Indo-Fijian tenants, leaving them no option but to remain impoverished in Fiji's deplorable squatter settlements (Bitter Harvest 2001).

Fiji's Independence

In 1965, the United Nations began conversations with the British Crown concerning Fiji's independence. These conversations eventually led to Fiji's independence on October 10, 1970. Under the new Constitution and Bill of Rights, Indo-Fijians were safeguarded and protected as equals to their indigenous Fijian counterparts. But the tide turned quickly, when members of the Fijian Nationalist Party (FNP) became uncertain about their political and economic future in Fiji. The FNP expressed their dissatisfaction for the new constitution, which treated Indo-Fijians as their equals. The disgruntled leader of the FNP, Sakeasi Butadroka, publically stated in 1975:

The time has arrived when Indians or people of Indian origin in this country be repatriated back to India and that their travelling expenses back home and compensation for their properties in the country be met by the British Government. (V. Lal 1990:19)

Desiring a Fiji without Indo-Fijians, Butadroka advised the descendants of the hardworking *girmitiyas* to relocate to India. For Butadroka, the growth Indo-Fijian community served as a threat. By 1976, the Indo-Fijian population of 295,000, accounted for 50 percent of Fiji's population (Kelly 1991:2), and many had entered in business and improved their economic positions in Fiji. Added to this, many Indo-Fijians were also attending secondary schools, and according to Helen Tavola "the secondary school students of the 1960s would be the professionals of 1970s and the leaders of the

1980s” (Tavola 1992:27). For instance, leaders such as Jai Ram Reddy emerged from this era and fought vehemently for Indo-Fijian rights in Fiji (B. Lal 2010).

Women’s Movement and Women’s Rights

The years from 1976 to 1985 were declared by the United Nations as the “Decade for Women: Equality, and Development.” This decade inspired the creation of Fiji’s first official feminist organization The Fiji’s Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM) (FWRM 2006:2). On April 10, 1986, fifty-six women of diverse backgrounds gathered at Des Voeux road in Suva to rally against “laws and policies which discriminated against women or that failed to adequately address their concerns” (FWRM 2006:1). This meeting led to the creation of the FWRM, which focused on improving the socio-economic and political statuses for *all* women of Fiji. The FWRM tackled major issues such as rape, domestic violence and conditions of women workers in the garment industry (FWRM 2006:3). Some of the most significant leaders of the FWRM included women of Indo-Fijian descent such as Shamina Ali, a founding member of the FWRM and the coordinator of the Fiji’s Women Crisis Center (FWCC), and FWRM lawyer Patricia Imrana Jalal.

By 1987, the FWRM voiced their concerns in Fiji’s politics. Progress was on the horizon for the women’s movement, especially with the newly elected Fiji Labor Party (FLP), which had promised a department of women’s affairs, an anti-sex discrimination bill, equal pay legislation, minimum wage regulations for garment and domestic workers and funding for the FWCC. However, the coups ensued the same year, leading to the postponement of such promises. The effects of the coups led the FWRM to become

polarized based on ethnic lines. Many indigenous Fijians left the movement but some would later return to support the organization (FWRM 2006:15). In the years to follow, the FWRM concentrated much of their efforts on Fiji's return to democracy. They believed that if Fiji was to make future progress, then an unbiased constitution was needed to protect the fundamental rights for *all* people.

Part 4: Four Coups in Twenty Years

First Coup: May 1987

Many others besides Butadroka foreshadowed Fiji's impending progress as a nation. In 1963, Adrian Mayer wrote in *Indians in Fiji*:

Since the desire of some people to deport Indo-Fijians is impractical, two alternatives remain. One is that the present communal separation will continue, with chronic tension and later, perhaps, periodic outbreaks of violence as economic and political pressure . . . This would hamper political evolution, would drive away outside investors, and would bring misfortune and suffering for many people. (1963:135)

Having witnessed the separation between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians himself, Mayer's predictions became a reality, and the small nation soon earned its disconcerting title as "Coup-Coup Land" (Robbie 2001, Revington 2011:98). Following the April 1987 parliamentary election, Fiji witnessed its first military coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka. Panicked by the fact that the multi-ethnic labor-led coalition the Fiji Labor Party (FLP) had come into power, Rabuka retaliated. On May 14, 1987, Rabuka and his men hijacked and detained the fairly elected Prime Minister Timcoi Bavadra, forcing him out of office (Lal 2004a:323). According to Rabuka, the coup was necessary for combatting "the Indian design for political domination" (Sharpham 2000:10, Trkna 2008:37). The propaganda of Indian domination led many indigenous Fijians to support

the overthrow, believing that the 1970 Constitution did not adequately protect their interest.

As soon as Rabuka took power, the army restricted coverage of newspapers, journalists were muzzled, and a military censor controlled broadcasts in Fiji (Dobell 2008:126). Vijendra Kumar, an Indo-Fijian editor of Fiji's national newspaper the *Fiji Times*, described suffering from "four years of harassment, intimidation, and outright threats" (B. Lal 2004a:323). He explained, "I could no longer honestly and without fear discharge my professional duties. I applied to migrate to Australia" (B. Lal 2004a:323). Several Indo-Fijian academics were also imprisoned while others were abducted and brutalized (Lal 2004a:327). Actively silenced during these periods of unrest, Indo-Fijians were deprived of their fundamental human rights such as their freedoms to speech, expression and association. To make matters worse, Indo-Fijians could not rely on the police for help as "bribery and corruption had become a way of life" during the coup (B. Lal 2004a:327). The general feeling amongst the Indo-Fijian community was that of fear, insecurity and uncertainty for their futures in Fiji. The results of the chaos led many to contact their relatives abroad in hopes of fleeing Fiji. Thus began the exodus of Indo-Fijians from their nation of birth to four main destinations abroad including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America.

Second Coup: October 1987

Less than half a year after Fiji's first military coup, Rabuka waged Fiji's second coup. Although the Fijian Supreme Court considered the first coup unconstitutional, negotiations between the dismissed government and the Alliance Party prompted Rabuka

to revolt once more. On September 23, 1987, an agreement was reached between the factions and resulted in the Deuba Accord. The Deuba Accord sought to create national unity through representing both parties under the leadership of the Governor-General. However, Rabuka was dissatisfied by the accord and waged a second coup, proclaiming himself as leader of Fiji, and Fiji a Republic (Rabuka 2012:13).

By 1990, Rabuka and his cabinet created a new constitution, which favored indigenous Fijians. But, the new constitution was short-lived for its “racist provisions,” and by 1997 a new constitution, which safeguarded Indo-Fijians was revealed to the public (Trkna 2008:38). By this time, however, many skilled and educated Indo-Fijians had already departed Fiji. Between 1987 and 1996, an estimated 5,100 Indo-Fijian professionals emigrated, of whom 21 percent were architects, engineers, and related technicians, 15 percent accountants, 31 percent teachers, 12 percent medical, dental, veterinary, and related workers, and 21 percent other professionals (B. Lal 2003). B. Lal states, “The impact of their loss on Fiji is visible and acutely felt, particularly in health and education. Once reasonably self-sufficient in medical personnel, Fiji now imports doctors from overseas. And there is a growing shortage of science and mathematics teachers” (B. Lal 2003). The loss of the skilled and educated Indo-Fijians greatly impacted the developing nation. B. Lal (2003) further comments on the high cost of emigration of Fiji, noting the nation loses on average FJD\$44.5 million annually due to loss of skill, re-training new appointees, and delayed appointments. As for unskilled and poverty-stricken Indo-Fijians, they had little choice but to endure through the coups until

Fiji returned back to “normalcy” (Trnka 2008). Between 1987 and 1996, 50,050 emigrated from Fiji, the annual average being 5,005 (B. Lal 2003).

Third Coup: May 2000

In Mid-March of 2000, an article appeared in Fiji’s national paper *The Fiji Times* entitled “Migration Is Key,” where Rabuka offered his perspective on the future of Indo-Fijians and the coming expiry of land leases. Rabuka predicted the potential for increased racial divide on the basis of territories and jobs. Although he was certain that society would live through the ethnic division, he yearned for Indo-Fijians to permanently depart Fiji. Foreshadowing Fiji’s third coup, Rabuka retorted:

My other hope is that Indians will migrate. We tighten controls, then Fiji is no longer attractive to Indian settlers as it has been over the last 120 years. Maybe they will slow down their immigration rate, probably increase their emigration rate, thereby having a natural decline in their numbers, to a level that would be manageable. When I’m talking about a manageable level I am talking about the tolerance threshold of the Fijians. Now it is beyond their tolerance level and that is why they are reacting, not because of the numbers but of what the Indians can do with the numbers. If they gain control of the professional life, the economic life, and the political life of this country with the numbers they have, then the tolerance level, the numbers level will have to be greatly reduced. And we won’t do that by the Butadroka-kind policy, forced migration, but by circumstances- driven migration. (Sharpham 2000:316-317)

Rabuka’s rant failed to recognize the fact that the majority of Indo-Fijians were the direct descendants of the *girmityas*, and that the Indo-Fijian community in Fiji was actually decreasing. Between 1987 and 1990, approximately 44,000 people emigrated from Fiji; the majority of the emigrants were Indo-Fijians (Asian Pacific Migration Research Network 2014).

Fiji's third coup followed shortly after the May 1999 parliamentary election when voters elected Mahendra Chaudhry, the leader of Fiji's Labor Party as the nation's first Indo-Fijian prime minister (Trkna 2008:8). As Fiji's newest prime minister, Chaudhry hoped to tackle issues surrounding land tenure, but his term was short-lived because in May of 2000, a group of renegade soldiers led by Fijian businessman George Speight entered Parliament and kidnapped Chaudhry and members of his cabinet, holding them hostage for 56 days (Robie 2001). In the meantime, an interim military government led by military Commodore Frank Bainimarama was set up, and Ratu Josefa Iloilo was declared president. But by November, the High Court declared the interim government illegal and reinstated the 1997 constitution (Robbie 2001). Although restored, the chaos and capture of Chaudhry prodded even more Indo-Fijians to emigrate from Fiji. The instability had once again instilled fear within the Indo-Fijian community. According to anthropologist Susana Trnka (2008), postcolonial Fiji had never seen the levels of violence that were experienced in the 2000 coup:

Much of the civilian violence was directed against Indo-Fijians in their homes, businesses, and properties. It was fueled by a racialized anti-Indian rhetoric that promotes images of Indo-Fijians as *vulagi*, or foreigners, who had usurped the rights of the *taukei*, or indigenous Fijians, to govern it. (2008:3)

Additionally, Trkna (2008) discussed the fear of rape of Indo-Fijian women:

Another attribute that appears in many of the rural violence narratives, frequently mentioned by both Indo-Fijian men and women, is of the Fijian assailant as a sexual predator. Rapes and threats of rape occurred during the coup, but even in cases where the threat was not explicitly made, there was a widespread assumption among many Indo-Fijians that when young Fijian men came into violent contact with Indo-Fijian women, there was the likelihood of rape . . . Many Indo-Fijians fears of potential victimization were primarily concentrated on women of childbearing age

or a few years younger, who were seen as the most likely targets of sexual violence. The result was that women from this age group were subject to specific concern and safeguarding. (2008:160)

Real or imagined, the victimization of Indo-Fijians caused apprehension and anxiety within the community. The third coup pushed out another 24,000 Indo-Fijians from Fiji, and for those who could not leave the islands resorted to other means. An alarming 200 Indo-Fijians committed suicide after the third coup, the highest of any single community in the world (Mishra 2007:42).

Fourth Coup: December 2006

In December of 2006, Fiji experienced its fourth coup. This coup was a direct retaliation to the 2000 coup and because of two bills under consideration at the time: the Qoliqoli Bill, which gave Fijian proprietary ownership of foreshore land and the Reconciliation, Tolerance, and Unity Bill, which granted individual amnesties to coup perpetrators and supporters (Ratuva 2007:38). Dissatisfied with the bills, Commodore Bainimarama overthrew the government on December 5, 2006, and declared Qarase's government corrupt for directing racially discriminatory policies against Indo-Fijians. He then transferred executive power back to Ratu Josefa Iloilo and declared himself interim Prime Minister of Fiji (Fraenkel 2007:420).

Indo-Fijian Emigration From Fiji

With four coups within a time span of 20 years, relentless issues over land and discriminatory treatment, Indo-Fijians were coerced from their country of birth. In 1987 the total population of Fiji was 721, 594 (World Bank 2015), and with the series of coups in Fiji, a total of 70,000-80,000 Indo-Fijians emigrated from Fiji after 1987 (B. Lal

2012:180). Altogether, even prior to the coups, over a third of the Fiji's Indo-Fijian population emigrated from the islands, or approximately 150,000 individuals (Naidu 2001). Geographer Manoranjan Mohanty, estimated that between 2000 and 2006 Fiji lost over 3,800 professional and technical specialists, which represented more than half of the nation's stock of middle high level workers (Miller 2008:387). The results of the exodus were devastating to Fiji. Brij Lal put it simplest, exclaiming:

Three coups in 13 years, two in 1987, and one in 2000, have dealt a severe blow to the island's economy, shaken investor confidence, strained race relations already frayed in an ethnically divided society, and corrupted the institutions and practices of good governance. Perhaps the most important consequence in the long term has been the emigration of the country's best and brightest to greener pastures in North America and Australasia, draining the small island nations of skill and talent it can ill-afford to lose. The tide of emigration is not likely to ebb anytime soon. (2003)

With the departure of Indo-Fijian professionals from Fiji, the nation now grapples with the demand for skilled laborers.

The Years After the Coups and Fiji's Current Situation

From 2006 to 2009, Fiji remained under the military dictatorship of Frank Bainimarama. In 2009, Bainimarama rescinded Fiji's third constitution and declared martial law in Fiji. Then in 2012, Bainimarama announced consultations for a new constitution in Fiji and promised for a fair election to be held in 2014. Interestingly, although Bainimarama had voiced early on that he would not run for the position of prime minister in the upcoming election, he ended up running as a proponent of the Fiji First Party and won by an overwhelming majority. Currently, Bainimarama is hoping to achieve democracy in Fiji through the new constitution.

Interestingly enough, perhaps the greatest irony behind the Indo-Fijian experience is that the same Indo-Fijians who were once forced from their nation of birth, are *now* being called upon to return to Fiji. On August 11, 2015, less than a year after being elected prime minister, Frank Bainimarama issued an apology to individuals who escaped from Fiji to Canada after the 1987 and 2000 coups. Echoing B. Lal, Bainimarama stated that their departure led to Fiji's brain drain and ultimately prevented the islands from decades of development. He also admitted that Fiji's citizens had suffered tremendously because of "certain selfish elements said they didn't belong." With multiple citizenships now allowed in Fiji, these former citizens are being urged to reconnect with their country of birth (Radio New Zealand International 2014).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides historical background for a consideration of the experiences of Indo-Fijian women. Although the experiences of those women were, of course, idiosyncratic, they also reflect a set of relatively uniform conditions under which they made personal decisions about their futures; granted most of their rationales were not explicitly stated at the time and must be inferred. The chapter showcases Indo-Fijian women's marginality in Fiji and also the lack of information about their lives where they remain invisible and silenced throughout the nation's history. It also reveals something about the conditions affecting Indo-Fijian men as well, conditions that indirectly and directly affected the women's experiences and decisions. But despite common conditions, Indo-Fijian women responded in a variety of ways so that we must be cautious about inferring a "typical" person or outcome. Subsequent chapters will explore

these responses by examining a sample of women living in Modesto, California. But first, it is important to establish how the research was undertaken.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to investigate the lives of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California. First a brief synopsis of feminist anthropology is offered as it provided a guiding framework for the study. Next, the chapter provides a discussion on the research design and explains the selection of participants, methods for data collection and data analysis. Finally, the chapter reviews the limitations of the methodology used for the study.

Understanding Women's Perspectives: Feminist Anthropology

While men are equally important to a holistic understanding of the Indo-Fijian immigrant experience, this study focuses exclusively on the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women because little is known about their experiences with migration to California. Also, since Indo-Fijian women have remained largely silent and invisible throughout history, I sought to engage in research that would bring women from the margins to the center. This led me delve into feminist anthropology, which ultimately stimulated my interest in the women's lives.

Nevertheless, feminist anthropology, which first emerged as a sub-discipline of anthropology in the mid 1970s (Lewin 2006:1), is an approach that critically evaluates relationships between men and women, focuses on understanding the nature of power, and connects political economy and culture. According to feminist anthropologist Louise Lamphere (2006), "feminist anthropology has always been about critique- critical appraisal of the social structures and cultural ideologies that shape women's lives and

reformulation of the theoretical apparatus that anthropologists have used to understand these structures and cultural notions” (2006:x).

Although feminist anthropology emerged as a formal sub-discipline of anthropology in the 1970s, feminist anthropology has been in the making since the late 19th century, and according to Kamala Visweswaran (1994), evolved over three major overlapping temporal waves. The first wave of feminist anthropology is rooted in the suffragist movements of the Progressive era. The goal of this wave, which extended from 1880 to 1920, was to begin recording women’s roles in culture (Aggrawal 2000:17). However, men conducted most ethnographic research at this time, and the knowledge they produced on women was usually taken from the perspectives of male informants. As a result, feminist anthropology materialized as a reaction to the androcentric bias in the discipline (Lamphere 1996:488).

Spanning from 1920 to 1980, the second wave focused on the academic sphere. During this phase, the notions of sex and gender were separated from one another. It was realized that the definition of gender varied from culture to culture (Lamphere 1996:488). During this wave, researchers relied heavily on materialistic perspectives and Marxist theories. According to feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975), Marxist theory appealed to feminist anthropologists because no theory accounted “for the oppression of women in its endless variety and monotonous similarity, cross-culturally and throughout history with anything like the explanatory power of the Marxists theory of class oppressions” (1975:160). Furthermore, during second wave feminism, gender not only emerged as a unit of analysis, but it also became a “foundational lens of analysis”

(Aggrawal 2000:17). Texts such as *Second Sex* [1952] by Simone de Beauvoir and *Feminine Mystique* [1963] by Betty Friedan inspired anthropological works such as *Women, Culture and Society* [1974], edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, and *Toward an Anthropology of Women* [1975], edited by Rayna Rapp. Also during this phase, the concept of universal sisterhood emerged, which was the view that women all over the world shared similar experiences. It was assumed that anthropology “done by women on women would erase the prejudices of masculinist science and that the shift from analytical ethnographies to experience-based narratives would signify authentic discourse on women” (Aggrawal 2000:17). However, this view was discredited by anthropologists such as Rosaldo (1980), who were dissatisfied with anthropological projects that tended to cast other women in the “image of ourselves undressed” (1980:392). Ravina Aggrawal (2000) notes Judith Stacey (1988) who describes “betrayal” as inherent in ethnography and that discords between the expectations, methods, and writing of feminism, at best produced “partially feminist ethnography” (Aggrawal 2000:18). Added to this, Marilyn Strathern (1987) described the “awkward” relationship between anthropology and feminism. Aggrawal (2000) describes that Strathern (1987) believes that feminism helped to expose anthropology’s patriarchal dominance, which subjected all women to be “otherized,” while on the other hand, anthropology mocked feminism’s “illusions of empathetically identifying with the subjection of other by pointing to feminists’ common origin within a Western scientific paradigm” (Aggrawal 2000:18).

By the 1980s, third wave feminist anthropology made headway with its radicalism and innovation. The major focus of this phase was to deconstruct the idea of universal sisterhood. Feminist anthropologists began acknowledging other categories of difference that intersected with gender such as race, ethnicity, class and sexuality (Aggrawal 2000:18). Other critiques ensued during third wave feminist anthropology. Some feminists became skeptical of fieldwork, which they associated with “unilateral Western hegemony” and “otherizing.” Aggrawal (2000) describes that according to Kamala Visweswaran (1994), fieldwork “propagates a doctrine of separating the notion of home as the ultimate domain of intellectual activity from the image of the field as a transformative but temporary space, generally confined to remote or peripheral locales. Instead, Visweswaran (1994) recommends that anthropologists engage in homework rather than fieldwork. She suggests taking more seriously the “knowledge, humanity, and history” when studying a culture, and for anthropologists to reflect on themselves, so they may better understand how their biases affect their research (Aggrawal 2000:19).

Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to investigate the women’s lives and was appropriate for the exploratory study. Although there are diverse traditions in conducting qualitative research, which vary from discipline to discipline, all qualitative research designs assume “non-objectivity and advocates contextualized knowledge and a multi-perspective holistic approach” (Berger 2004:30). Berger (2004) states in her book *Immigrant Women Tell Their Stories* that “Understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it and seeing through their lens is the

core of qualitative research” (2004:30). Since the study was a preliminary exploration on Indo-Fijian immigrant women in the United States, and also because I was interested in learning about the perspectives and experiences of the women from their own voices, a qualitative research was the most appropriate since data consisted of mainly words to which meaning would be ascribed. Thus, a quantitative research design, which seeks to quantify data into numbers or use statistical methods, was simply inappropriate for meeting the study’s objectives.

The qualitative research methods used for the study included participant-observations, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, which allowed for gaining an in-depth understanding of the women’s perspectives and experiences as immigrants residing in Modesto, California. The process of qualitative research was also flexible and allowed for the direction of the study to change as it proceeded. For example, the original study focused on the lives of first-generation and second-generation Indo-Fijian women residing in Modesto, California. However, since this was the first foray into the field, I decided it was appropriate to first establish research on first-generation Indo-Fijian immigrant women, which will then allow for proposing future research questions on the unique diaspora, and ultimately on the lives of second-generation Indo-Fijians.

Research Site

Historically, California has been a popular destination for immigrants around the world, and this still remains the case today. In the last half of the century, California has received more immigrants than any other state, and these immigrants are also ethnically

and racially diverse. In 2014, the U.S. Census revealed California to be more multicultural than ever before with Hispanics comprising 38.6 percent of the population, followed by 14.4 percent Asians, 6.5 African-Americans, 1.7 percent Native Americans and 0.5 percent Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (U.S. Census: California Quick Facts 2014).

Moreover, major cities in California such as Los Angeles and Sacramento are recognized for their ethnic diversity. TIME magazine acknowledged Sacramento as the most ethnically diverse community in California, where people are said to live side by side more successfully than in other cities (Stoghill and Bower 2002). Modesto, which is an hour drive south of Sacramento, is also a richly diverse city. Modesto is comprised of 35.5 percent Hispanics, 6.7 percent Asians, 4.2 percent African-Americans, and 1.0 percent Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders (U.S. Census: Modesto Quick Facts 2014). With a population of more than 200,000, Modesto attracts sojourners and permanent settlers alike. Ethnic groups with origins in many countries reside in Modesto including Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Cambodians, Hmong, Vietnamese, Japanese, Indians, Armenians and Indo-Fijians. Indo-Fijians are densely concentrated in Modesto, California, and evidence of the community can be found through various shops, temples, restaurants and associations scattered throughout the city. In Modesto, the size of the foreign-born population from Fiji is estimated at 8 percent (City-Data 2015) while the total foreign-born population from Fiji in the United States is estimated at 39,235 (U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 2013). The majority of these immigrants are of Indo-Fijian descent. Nonetheless, by focusing on the lives of Indo-Fijian women in

Modesto, California, we can begin to understand the distinct gendered experiences of Indo-Fijian immigrants in a specific locale.

Selection of Participants

Before recruiting participants for the study, I obtained approval to conduct research from San Jose State's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This phase consisted of generating flyers for the study, an interview protocol, sample interview questions and informed consent forms. Using a purposive sampling technique for the exploratory study, I began the recruitment process by handing out flyers to potential participants, and friends and families of potential participants. The purposive sampling strategy was useful since Indo-Fijians are a "hidden" population in California: they are not only small in numbers but are often mistaken for subcontinent Indians. Nevertheless, through constant communication with members of the Indo-Fijian community in Modesto, I recruited five Indo-Fijian immigrant women for the study. In order to protect their identities and to keep them from harms way, the women appear in the study under the pseudonyms Krishna, Malti, Priya, Asha, and Sheela (Anthropological Association 2012).

Recruiting women for the study was not as easy task as I thought it would be. Although I reached out to many Indo-Fijian immigrant women in Modesto, many declined to participate in the study because they believed they would not be of any help to me. Other women showed interest in the study but declined to partake because of work and family obligations. One potential participant cancelled minutes before our meeting. She explained that several years ago her husband had been deported and that

her daughter advised her to not participate in the study, fearing that her participation might lead to deportation.

Description of the Research Participants

This section briefly introduces the five Indo-Fijian immigrant women who participated in the study. Important to note is that the women come from a narrow age group. At the time of the study, the women ranged from the ages of 44-57. Although they are a non-representative sample, I decided to include the women in the study for two reasons. First, as a preliminary exploration into the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women in the United States, these participants were *willing* to share their experiences and perspectives. As mentioned, recruiting women for the study was not an easy task. Although I described the reasons why women declined to participate, I came to realize that some were not willing to partake in the study because they were simply engrained with the idea of being silent as they were in Fiji. Thus, it becomes extremely salient to share the stories of Indo-Fijian immigrant women who were *willing* to speak about their lives. Secondly, my decision to include the women from a narrow age range is to highlight the variability amongst a group of people of similar ages. Through the silhouettes, we learn that the women may have been of similar ages but their experiences and perspectives are distinctive and personal.

Krishna

Krishna who was 53 at the time of the interviews, emigrated from Fiji to California in 1980. She was the first woman recruited for the study. I met Krishna through the help of an Indo-Fijian friend who had recommended her. I was told that

Krishna had migrated to California as a single mother and would be a good candidate for the study. I gave my friend a flyer to give to Krishna, and after a couple of days, I received a text message from Krishna herself, expressing her interest in the study. After calling Krishna back and explaining to her my research endeavors, she enthusiastically agreed to participate in the study. Interviews, informal conversations and participant-observations occurred at her home. Learning about her experiences and perspectives did not occur in just one sitting, but over several sittings and many hours. The interviews took place on weekday evenings after she arrived home from work. But prior to interviewing her, Krishna always insisted that I have a meal with her and her family. I never declined and it was a pleasure to eat Krishna's home cooked meals. After dinner, Krishna and I would retreat from the rest of her family to her private veranda for our conversations.

Malti

The second woman recruited for the study was 55-year-old Malti, who emigrated from Fiji to Modesto in 1994 with her husband and three children. I was introduced to Malti through a close family member who recommended her for the study. After speaking to Malti via telephone, she agreed to participate. However, Malti was not able to meet at her house for an interview because she spent most of her time working at her family business. Instead, Malti asked for the interview to take place at her work, which was different from the other women who chose to have the interviews in their homes. Nonetheless, I was thrilled to meet Malti at her workplace because I was able to observe her day-to-day activities and tasks there. Although I only had one formal interview with

Malti, our conversation spanned for nearly eight hours. Not only was I able to interview her but I was able to conduct participant-observations at her workplace. After the interview, Malti and I engaged in a series of informal conversations.

Priya

The third woman to participate in the study was 57-year-old Priya whom I had also met through a close family member. After giving a flyer to my relative to give to Priya, she contacted me via telephone to learn about the objectives of the study. I explained to her in detail the research endeavors, and she agreed to participate in the study. Interviews, informal conversations and participant-observations occurred at Priya's home. Priya was extremely welcoming and made chai for us to sip during the interviews. The interviews occurred in two sittings and ended promptly after her grandchildren arrived home from school. With the formal interview ending, participant-observations and informal conversations continued until she would prepare dinner for her family.

Asha

Asha, who was 44 at the time of the interview, migrated to California in 1983 as a 12-year-old adolescent girl. Asha was recommended for the study through an Indo-Fijian friend who gave Asha a flyer on my behalf. After reviewing the flyer, Asha reached me via e-mail. I communicated the goals of the research to her, and she agreed to participate in the study. Without hesitation, she invited me to her home for an interview. Asha greeted me with a delicious cup of homemade chai and samosas prior to the interview. The interview with Asha was effortless; however, her husband was home during the

interview in the next room watching television. Thus, to be respectful to Asha and her husband, I refrained from asking her too many personal questions such as details about her marriage or her role as a stepmother. After the interview was over, Asha gave me permission to call or e-mail her if I had any more questions for her. I took advantage of this opportunity and was able to ask her questions I was not able to during the interview.

Sheela

Sheela who was 51 at the time of the interview, migrated to California in 1969 at the young age of six. I had met Sheela years ago through a close Indo-Fijian friend, and I reached out to her for an interview. Although I had not seen Sheela for years, she warmly agreed to an interview. Her daughter was also pursuing her master's, and she wanted to help with the study in whatever ways she could. Nevertheless, Sheela and I met during the weekend for a long interview at her home. Prior to the interview, Sheela offered me cookies and coffee, which I happily accepted. The interview with Sheela was different from the other women in the study because due to her early age of arrival in California, her memories of Fiji were sparse. Moreover, the interview with Sheela was the most difficult because her husband was present for half of the conversation. For instance, Sheela often looked to her husband to help answer interview questions. When this happened, it was not always easy to re-direct the conversation back to her. So, to remedy the situation, Sheela and I spoke "off the record" during informal conversations.

Methods and Instruments for Data Collection

Participant Observations

A mainstay in anthropological and ethnographic studies, participant observations were collected for the study and recorded in a field notebook. Participant observations, which can be defined as “the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of the participants in the research setting” (Schensul, et al 1999:91), were used to gain a deeper understanding about the women’s lives. By conducting the majority of the participant-observations in the women’s homes, I was able to observe the women in their familiar settings. For example, while at Priya and Asha’s homes, I noticed the women and their families watching Zee TV, an Indian cable and satellite channel on their televisions. These observations led me to consider the contributions that technology plays in helping the women and their families connect to their ancestral land India, and the ways in which technology creates transnational spaces for the Indo-Fijian community in Modesto.

Furthermore, since what people *do* is often different from what they *say*, participant observations helped to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study. For example, all the women talked about cooking Indo-Fijian cuisine in their interviews. By conducting participant observations, I was able to confirm that the women *do* cook and hold the recipes for traditional Indo-Fijian cuisine. I watched both Krishna and Priya prepare intricate Indo-Fijian foods and drinks such as spicy fish curry and lemongrass *cha* (tea). Moreover, the women also validated their lives and experiences in Fiji by showing me various forms of evidence such as pictures, books, clothing and cookware

that they had brought with them to California. Last but not least, I was also able to confirm their memories, perspectives and experiences with members of their families, or by member checking. This method was useful and helped to develop a more “holistic understanding of the phenomena under study” (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002:92).

In-depth Interviews

The bulk of the data was collected through semi-structured, open-ended in-depth interviews. According to sociologist Shulamit Reinharz (1992), interviews are especially useful in feminist research and allows for accessing the voices of those who are marginalized in a society. She states:

Interviewing offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women. (1992:19)

Thus, interviews were chosen as a data collection instrument because they helped to fulfill the goal of understanding the women’s lives from their perspective. Added to this, interviews were also utilized because as Weiss (1994) writes in the introductory paragraph of *Learning From Strangers*:

Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life. We can learn about the work of occupations and how people fashion careers, about cultures and the values they sponsor, and about the challenges people confront as they live their lives. We can also through interviewing about people’s interior experience . . . We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition. (1994:1)

Using this insight, I constructed a specific interview guide, consisting of questions I planned to cover in the interviews. The questions were also open-ended, so the women

could give in-depth factual descriptions about their lives. This allowed for the women to speak in long monologues, and also allowed for capturing the women's emotions, something a "yes" or "no" questionnaire or survey cannot do. Additionally, the semi-structured design of the interviews allowed for probing specific areas of interests. Last but not least, although all the women were fluent speakers of Fiji Hindi, all the women chose to speak English for the interviews; every once in awhile, the women used Fiji Hindi words, phrases or expressions while we conversed. With the women's permission, the interviews were tape-recorded to make sure data was accurately transcribed and not distorted.

Informal Conversations

Some of the most interesting data was attained "off the record," through informal conversations. This was a useful approach and allowed for collecting information not addressed in the interviews. For example, Sheela and I engaged in informal conversations about Miss America 2014, which she brought up on her own accord. Sheela commented on the xenophobic and racist comments made against Nina Davuluri, the first Indian-American to win the title of Miss America. Although Sheela felt upset about the negative comments made toward Davuluri, she was proud that a woman of Indian descent had won the competition. Sheela exclaimed that Davuluri had broken the traditional American standards of beauty that she felt she never fit into. These types of informal conversations helped to enhance the quality of the data by providing an opportunity to engage in natural dialogue and to collect information not easily attained by the semi-structured interviews.

Reflexive Approach

Reflexivity, a tool highly valuable to anthropologists and feminist researchers alike, was utilized for the study. In anthropology, reflexivity is defined as the act of reflecting or “turning back on oneself, a self-reference” (Davies 1999:4). Reflexive anthropology is grounded on the basis that fieldwork is considered an intersubjective process which is created through many subjectivities (Briggs 1970; Geertz 1971; Rabinow 1977), including those of the researchers and their theoretical perspectives, and the perspectives and representations of the study participants (Srinivas 1966, 1979). Reflexivity was an important approach to the study and gave me the opportunity to evaluate my own biases as the researcher. For instance, my identity as a second-generation Indo-Fijian woman from Modesto helped me to conceptualize the research. More specifically, being born and raised in Modesto for 18 years of my life by two Indo-Fijian immigrant parents, I have been imbedded in the Indo-Fijian diaspora in Modesto since birth. Not only do I know many Indo-Fijians and speak Fiji Hindi fluently, I also know where and how to access Indo-Fijian “ethnic raw materials” or ethnically linked symbols and practices in Modesto (Jimenez 2010). For instance, I have been shopping at Indo-Fijian markets in Modesto since I was young, consuming and buying staple Indo-Fijian goods such as turmeric, durian fruit, cassava, incense, *booja* (spicy snack mix), Bollywood films and Indian clothing. To this day, I still shop at the same Indo-Fijian markets that I went to as a child. I even visit the Indo-Fijian Hindu temples in Modesto and have attended countless *pujas*, weddings and Hindu festivals in the city such as *Diwali* and *Ram Navami*. I also attend Modesto’s Fiji Festival, a spinoff of Hayward,

California Fiji Festival, both of which are held annually in the months of June and July, and provide a space for Indo-Fijians to celebrate and experience their unique identity through foods, music, dances, art, and a variety of cultural performances. Thus, my identity as a second-generation woman of the Indo-Fijian diaspora in Modesto allowed me to readily identify the community and gain access into the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women.

However, although being an “insider” (Kanuha 2000) of the community had many advantages such as gaining easier access and acceptance to the community and having an understanding of various cultural nuances, it comes with its own set of disadvantages. Perhaps the greatest difficulty of being an insider was balancing the dual role of being an “insider” and a “researcher.” For example, while conducting an interview with Sheela, I assumed she was aware of the fact Indians were brought to Fiji as indentured laborers. To my surprise, she did not know this information and in shock exclaimed to me, “My dad never told us we were *slaves!*” Interestingly, Sheela’s husband who was present at the time of the interview, confirmed that Sheela’s descendants were *girmitiyas*. He had discussed her ancestral roots with Sheela’s father before he had passed away. After that experience, I began distancing myself from the research, realizing that not all Indo-Fijian immigrants would be privy to Indo-Fijian history. Another moment (which I mention earlier), where I took serious consideration of my role as a researcher was when one potential participant cancelled our meeting because her daughter did not want her mother to face the possibility of deportation like her father had. Although I assured the potential participant that her identity and personal information would be protected, she was not

willing to take the risk. This experience made we aware of the fact that some women might view me as possible legal authority that could affect their lives in negative ways. Nevertheless, these were only some of the ways I affected the research, and I acknowledge that there may be others that are still invisible to me. For example, it is not uncommon for insiders to take something for granted that stands out to outsiders.

Approaches to Data Analysis and Presentation

Transcription

Data analysis involved several steps and was an iterative process. The first step to data analysis was transcribing field notes from participant observations, interviews and interview field notes. To reduce the time-consuming process of data transcription, I used the computer transcription software Express Scribe, which shortens the duration of transcription and enhances the quality with its special software features. For example, Express Scribe features variable speed playback (constant pitch), which allowed me to slow down the speech from the audio-recordings. This feature was especially useful when the women spoke too quickly, or if I had difficulties deciphering through heavy accents.

Thematic Analysis

The next step in analyzing the data set was conducting thematic analysis, which served as a tool for finding meaningful patterns across the data set. This in turn helped form the basis of the anthropological silhouettes. Like transcription, thematic analysis was also an iterative process and occurred throughout the research process. According to R.E Boyatzis, thematic analysis is the process of “encoding qualitative information”

(Boyatzis 1998:vii), or simply the act of developing codes, words or phrase that function as labels for portions of data. After identifying themes, I developed codes. I identified themes by searching for repetition, transitions, indigenous typologies, metaphors and linguistic connectors throughout the data set (Bernard and Ryan 2010). For example, one of the themes found in the research was “significant social networks,” and codes and for this theme included “strong ties” and “weak ties,” while some of the sub-codes included “family,” “friends,” and “co-workers.” Nonetheless, these types of codes were applied to the entire data set, which was written in the margins of the transcripts.

After coding the data, I began the process of “cutting and pasting,” which involved cutting and pasting the codes into piles of codes (Bernard and Ryan 2010:94-95). I was able to do this on my word processor. By this point, I was able to extract data from its original context so I could look for patterns across the data set. For example, while coding the theme “citizenship,” I learned that every woman in the study became an American citizen because of the benefits that came along with having citizenship. I also learned that citizenship allowed the women to feel a sense of belonging in the United States. Nevertheless, these types of patterns found in the data set helped to form the basis of the anthropological silhouettes as well as the study’s discussion.

Anthropological Silhouettes

In order for the women’s voices to be heard, the data is presented in the next chapter as anthropological silhouettes. An anthropological silhouette is a form of life-writing (the recording of events and experiences of a life), which is considered “less

complete than a biography, and partial, but demonstrably based on an individual and is honest about its limitations and incompleteness” (Zeitlyn 2008:159); like any biography, it is a product of work by the interviewee and interviewer. This approach was not only appropriate for the study because it allows for the women’s voices to be heard, but also because the approach recognizes the limitations of documenting people’s lives.

Moreover, anthropological silhouettes are useful for archiving the lives of people whose lives may not have been documented otherwise. The anthropological silhouettes weave together my voice as the researcher with that of the women to describe their journeys with migration. The silhouettes were assembled by extracting data that provided information on the women’s lives as they experienced it in Fiji and their eventual migration and transition to life in California. Furthermore, I assembled the silhouettes by including themes found in and across the data set. Nevertheless, to make the anthropological silhouettes easier to read, I started in chronological order describing the women’s lives in Fiji to their eventual migration and transition to life in California. Last but not least, the anthropological silhouettes were also utilized because I could showcase the women as individuals with a set of diverse experiences and perspectives from one another, all while revealing the commonalities that arise amongst their experiences as Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California.

Limitations of the Methodology

As with all methodologies, quantitative or qualitative, limitations are inevitable. First, although a qualitative approach was used to explore the women’s lives, a great deal of data was gathered through participant observations, in-depth interviews and informal

conversations, which made sorting through the large volume of data a time-consuming process. Another limitation to the study included focusing exclusively on women's lives. Although the goal of the research was to learn about Indo-Fijian immigrant women, to gain a more holistic understanding about Indo-Fijian immigrants in California, Indo-Fijian immigrant men must also come under investigation. Nevertheless, despite some of the limitations that I encountered during the study, the goal of the study remains to give a voice to a vulnerable group of people. Marjorie Shostak (1989) describes it best in

Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives:

It is for Shmuel, Nisa, and the silent others they represent, as well as for ourselves that we should continue to record these lives and memories. The ethical and methodological problems may be formidable, but they are small compared to the goal. Indeed, the most important ethical message regarding life-histories is not a restriction but an obligation to make every effort to overcome obstacles, to go out and record the memories of people whose ways of life often are preserved only in those memories. And we should do it, urgently, before they disappear. (1989:239)

Although different from life-histories, the same can be said in regards to anthropological silhouettes. Anthropologists have a responsibility of over-coming any challenges so that we can continue to document the lived experiences of people, especially those that have been pushed to the margins.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the methodology used to investigate the lives of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California. First, the chapter discussed the framework that guided the study. Next, the chapter provided a discussion on the research design and detailed the selection of participants, methods for data collection and data analysis. Finally, the chapter reviewed some of the limitations of the methodology. The

following chapter presents the five anthropological silhouettes, which provide a glimpse into the lives of Krishna, Malti, Priya, Asha, and Sheela. The silhouettes showcase the women's individual experiences with their journey from Fiji to California, which are diverse, complex, and multi-layered. However, after reading each of the silhouettes, it becomes clear that the women share commonalities amongst their experiences as Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California.

Chapter 4: Anthropological Silhouettes

Introduction

This chapter presents five anthropological silhouettes on the lives of Indo-Fijian immigrant women who appear under the pseudonyms Krishna, Malti, Priya, Asha, and Sheela. As described in the previous chapter, anthropological silhouettes are a form of life-writing, which is considered “less complete than a biography, and partial, but demonstrably based on an individual and is honest about its limitations and incompleteness” (Zeitlyn 2008:159). The anthropological silhouettes were appropriate for the study because the approach allows for the women’s voices to be heard. Nevertheless, the anthropological silhouettes weave together my voice as the researcher with that of the women to present their lives as they once lived them in Fiji, to their eventual migration and transition to life in Modesto, California.

While reading the five anthropological silhouettes, it is important to reflect on the historical context provided in chapter 2. By keeping in mind the history of Indo-Fijians in Fiji, it becomes clear that these women’s lives are situated and entangled in a larger social, cultural, political and economic history, which inevitably shaped their lives and precipitated their migration.

Anthropological Silhouette: Krishna

Growing Up in Nausori, Fiji

Krishna was born in 1960 and grew up in the town of Nausori located alongside Fiji’s longest, widest and most important waterways: the Rewa River. Raised in a small house with her mother, father, three younger sisters, and a younger brother, Krishna

described growing up in poverty:

We were *really* poor. Because I was the oldest one, so I *really* know . . . My dad was the only one who was working and he was only bringing two dollars a week . . . We didn't have enough clothes to wear. My mom used to make clothes for us out of her *saris* (Indian wrap dress). We never wore store bought clothes . . . we didn't even know what a store bought underwear looked like because we never had one.

With no running pipes or electricity, the Rewa River became vital to their daily lives and was used for a variety of everyday tasks:

We use to go wash our clothes over there. We did our dishes over there. We use to take our baths and showers in the river . . . we use to drink the river water . . . and get fish from the river . . . We use to do this because we didn't have any water.

But the Rewa River was not only vital to Krishna's family's daily lives, but also to the daily lives of her Indo-Fijian neighbors. Krishna had fond memories of these neighbors.

She reminisced about the friendliness of the Indo-Fijian community and recalled:

Everybody knew *everybody*. Everybody would mingle together! *Everybody!* The whole community would get together . . . that is how it was. Everybody watched out for each other . . . And people use to have animals . . . If somebody in the neighborhood knew that, oh that cow doesn't have water . . . [then] they would get water and they would give it to the cow. That is how it was. It *was* like that. I miss all that.

Schooling Year: Primary School

Krishna described her primary school years as filled with moments of joy and frustration. The challenging aspects of these years were due to the fact that Krishna was the eldest and also a daughter. In addition to going to school, she was required to fulfill a variety of household tasks. By the age of ten, Krishna's morning routine started by waking up before five o'clock to cook a breakfast of *roti* [bread], curry and *chai* [tea]. She then put together parcels for each member of her family to take for the day. After

this chore, Krishna also helped her siblings dress in their uniform before she quickly prepared herself for the day. But, her responsibilities did not end with the morning routine. Immediately after school, Krishna would go to the river with her siblings to wash their uniforms. After completing these tasks, she would then start her homework until it was time for her to prepare dinner for her family. While Krishna took care of these tasks, her mother spent the day working in the nearby fields:

It was *my* responsibility to help. It was given to me because I already knew *how* to cook. She had chores to do too. She used to go in the field and plant beans and sugar cane and rice and stuff like that. My mom never relaxed for a day. She had a full-time responsibility in the fields . . . she had to go plant and harvest everything . . . that was food for us.

Although *her* responsibility, Krishna often became overwhelmed with everything she had to do. Moreover, school came fraught with its own set of responsibilities. Krishna's school was strict, and girls were required to abide by a series of rigid rules. She was required to dress in a crisp-clean uniform consisting of a blouse and past knee-length skirt, with her hair set in two neat braids. She was also forbidden from wearing makeup or nail polish. Krishna recalled on a friend who was suspended from school for wearing nail polish. She was then reminded of her own personal experience with having to face the consequences of breaking school rules. Krishna described the punishment she received after plagiarizing her friend's math homework:

I was so [bad] in math that I didn't want to do it. I used to get homework everyday. Maybe out of only like 20 questions [math problems], I would do one or two . . . I use to have this friend, [who was in the] same class . . . [and] he used to let me copy his homework. One day I was trying to copy [the assignment] . . . and I didn't fully copy the paper and my teacher had seen me. I was caught and he hit me, then he let me go and he sent me for one hour to go pull weeds. When the one-hour was over, he sent one of the students to get me. I came inside, then he made me go sit crisscross in

front of the classroom. I sat there until end of the period and there was no recess for me . . . it made my self-esteem go down.

Thoroughly humiliated by the experience, Krishna never plagiarized again. Besides this incident, Krishna enjoyed school and her favorite subjects were history and literature. She found Indo-Fijian history especially interesting since her great-great grandparents were *girmityas*. According to Krishna, her ancestors were coerced by the British into coming to Fiji and that “they [British] never let them go. They [great-great grandparents] were just left there [Fiji].” Although her ancestors had suffered immensely, she believed the community had progressed since the indentured period.

Secondary School and Abuse

For Krishna, secondary school years were filled with many obstacles, none of which concerned her academics. Her main focus was trying to cope with an abusive, alcoholic father. Krishna explained that her father was extremely strict and threatened her by saying things such as:

‘You can’t talk to strangers. You can’t talk to boys. You can’t have boyfriends. You make sure you focus on school and get your education. And if you ever have a boyfriend,’ he was going to get me . . . [my father] said he would hit me. He said he would kill me and he would put me in the river.

Scared of her father, Krishna obeyed his rules without question. She did not want to be on his ruthless side since she felt her father was capable of anything when under the influence of alcohol. Krishna recalled a disturbing memory where she had witnessed her father purposefully push her mother off a high platform that broke her leg. Until this very day, Krishna describes being haunted by the traumatic memories of her abusive father. It was not long before Krishna became the target of his abuse. She recalled the

first time she was beaten by her father:

My dad had a girlfriend, and that is one of the other reasons why my dad use to beat my mom. He had this girlfriend on the side . . . Around 17 years old my dad said, 'You know what, we need to marry her.' My mom [disagreed], '[Krishna] is going to school . . . she is young.' My dad said 'No!' Then my mom said, 'Only if you stop seeing that lady! And then my dad said, 'No I can't do that.' [Later, I found out that my father's girlfriend] had an older son . . . My dad told my mom that I'm going to marry her to this boy . . . My mom said 'No! I'm not going to let that happen!' So then my dad beat my mom so much that day that she had a broken jaw. She was bleeding. She was bruised and everything, you know? Since that day, [when] my mom said that to my dad, 'I'm not getting my daughter married!' . . . then, oh my God! Everyday Friday and Saturday my dad would drink . . . and then he would beat my mom, and then he would beat *me*. He use beat me so bad just because of that!

Infidelity was the catalyst of the on-going abuse in Krishna's household. She described yet another disturbing memory of being brutally attacked by her father:

My sister said [to my dad] 'Krishna won't marry that guy! And then that Friday, my dad came from work. He brought alcohol bottles and put them away. [Then he] told my sister to go cut two or three *dandas* (pieces of wood, sticks or branches) . . . from the hibiscus trees . . . She did it because if she *didn't* do it, she would get hit [by my father]. That is how it was. Most of the time he [would] beat my mom and me up when it got dark. When it [was] night. That night he called me [over to him] and started beating me. He hit me so much, so much, so much . . . with the *danda*! It broke into pieces. Then he picked up another *danda* and then he slapped me. He punched me. [As] he did this I just fell [to] the ground.

For Krishna, this was not the end of the abuse. She continued:

No one knew. So that was the first day. Then every week he used to beat my mom and me. Just because I said I won't marry that boy. My mom [would] cry during the day [when] my dad would be gone at work. My mom would go up to God and pray to God 'Oh God, please save my daughter's life!'

Wishing for her mother's prayers to be heard was not enough to end the violence. One day Krishna was so severely beaten by her father that a piece of the *danda* skewered her

leg. Worried about her daughter's leg, Krishna's mother took her to the hospital without her father's knowledge. When asked by the doctor how her daughter had been injured, Krishna's mother lied about the incident. According to Krishna, her mother had no choice but to lie because at the time the Fijian police did not treat domestic violence cases seriously:

My mom didn't say I got hit. My mom said we were playing on the tree outside and fell and got bruised and the *danda* hit and got in . . . She lied because the police would come to the house and talk to my dad and things would just get worse at the house. They would just warn him and that's about it.

Unfortunately, a brief visit from the police with a warning could potentially worsen the situation at home. The possibility of facing severe retribution from her husband kept Krishna's mother silent about the abuse. Like her mother, Krishna also stayed quiet.

Misfortune of the Bride

Violence continued in Krishna's household, and her mother believed that the only way to protect Krishna was to have her married. Krishna, who was only 17 and had no desire to marry, and had recently found a job, had no other option but to quit. She explained:

I [had] graduated from that school and applied for a job . . . And I got hired! I went to work [for] one day, the first day, and that was it . . . that was my first day and my last day because the talk of my marriage came around!

Krishna was quickly married to her Indo-Fijian groom. She described the events of her arranged marriage in the following passage:

So then they [in-laws and future husband] came to the house and I was still inside the back room. So they were in the living room talking about it [the marriage]. So they agreed to it. So they set this date . . . I was scared

to death . . . I didn't know the *meaning* of marriage . . . So they agreed . . . Four days later, we had a court marriage . . . And then two weeks later, my real wedding was set up . . . Indian style . . . So then I got married. I was very, very sad . . . depressed. I would cry. Hide myself, and cry . . . I never cried in front of my mom because my mom was always abused and cried everyday. My dad would have killed me if I didn't marry that boy.

Taking the chance, an arranged marriage seemed better to Krishna than the possibility of ending up dead in the river.

Unfortunately for Krishna, the disadvantages of an arranged marriage were all too real. She described the night of her wedding as a horrifying experience. After arriving at her in-laws' house, Krishna's mother-in-law directed her to her new bedroom, where her new groom met her. Krishna, who was not aware of the concept of sex at the time, explained that her new husband raped her. Terrified, Krishna voiced the incident to her mother-in-law who assured her that it was "normal" behavior for a married couple.

Less than a week of being married, tension began brewing at the house. In an explosive fight between her husband and in-laws, Krishna discovered that her new husband never wanted to marry her:

He told me, 'I didn't want to get married! I didn't want to get married! I have a girlfriend!' And he said, 'I wanted to get married to this girlfriend, but she is not my race! She is not from my culture!' She was a different race. She was Samoan. So his parents didn't agree. So they actually lied to him and told him that if you get married to an Indian girl, then we will give you a motorcycle.

Krishna's in-laws never gave their son a motorcycle. Caught in the middle of the conflict, there was little she could do about the situation. For the next several years, Krishna remained a silent bystander in a "loveless" marriage. Cast aside by her husband, she remained under the watchful eye of her mother-in-law, who had quickly come to despise

her:

So, everyday . . . this man [my first husband], he really got pissed. So he said to his mother, ‘You take this lady [Krishna], you take this woman [Krishna], keep her with you and I’m going!’ So for a few days he left and he stayed with his girlfriend. I was sad. I was crying. I wouldn’t eat or anything . . . You know what, then that lady [mother in-law] was mean to me! I guess because her son left and that her son was mad and agitated. So now they were taking everything out on me . . . Then they made me a *slave* there.

From dawn to dusk, Krishna was required to take care of all domestic chores. She also had limited rights in the household and tolerated a plethora of house rules. She explained that her mother-in-law had strict control over the females in the house. Krishna then provided an example of how her sister-in-law endured horrific physical torture for breaking her mother-in-law’s rules:

No girls were allowed to go outside of the doors . . . That was the rule from the parents [in-laws]. The girls were not even allowed to look through the window either. If they did, if they catch you, they gonna burn you! One of their daughters’, she was 14 years old . . . and it just so happened that she peeked through the window and she said ‘Oh *fuwa* (father’s sister) is coming!’ She said she had seen her *fuwa* coming and her mom heard what her daughter had said, and OH MY GOD! I was there at that time because I was washing [my in-law’s] clothes. Her mom goes to the stove and turns it on. Then she took a metal spatula [and] put [the spatula] on the stove [to make] it hot! She made it hot and she took the girl’s hand and held it like this (Krishna raised up her palm) and she put that thing there (pointing to her forearm)! I screamed [because] I was scared! She burned her arm from here to here! The skin came off with the metal! Nobody helped her. No doctor. No nothing. That was very evil!

Krishna took the inhumane punishment of her then sister-in-law as a warning. If her mother-in-law could hurt her own daughter, then surely she was surely capable of hurting Krishna. Thus, just as with her father, she obeyed her mother-in-law’s rules and remained silent about the violence.

Things were further complicated when Krishna became pregnant with her first child:

One day he comes in the house and he was nice all of a sudden. He was really nice. That day he slept with me. We had sex. And then he was nice. And I'm still emotional. I'm crying and all that. The next day he went to work. He slept with me again. We had sex. And all of a sudden I think I got pregnant! I didn't know what pregnancy was or how you get pregnant! I was really sick. I couldn't keep anything in me and I was feeling weak. So finally one day, he [my husband at the time] seen me . . . that I was going through hell. Half a day he took off. He came. He said okay, you get ready and I'll take you to the doctor. We went to the doctor. This was a native doctor . . . He spoke English and Hindi. And so he wanted to check my urine. So I gave him that. The results came and he said you are pregnant. He told me that! And I said, 'What?' He said '*tumma phet meh bucha*' (you have a child in your stomach). And I didn't know what he meant by that! I know *phet* is stomach, but I didn't know what the *bucha* (child) was . . . So he told me that you are going to have a baby . . . so I got pregnant. Oh my God, then here came the drama!

Unaware of pregnancy or even how it occurred, Krishna was shocked by the news that she would soon be a mother. The only thing more shocking for Krishna was the ill treatment she received from her mother-in-law. Krishna described her mother-in-law's attempts to abort her daughter:

By then I got pregnant and oh my god, things were not really that good and his mom used to beat me. She tried to give me stuff to drink so I would miscarry. Cause she said you are not supposed to do this. You are not supposed to have this. But nothing worked though. I don't know why. She gave me stuff and it made me sick and throw up, but nothing worked. Nothing worked . . . She knew her son never wanted to get married. He wanted somebody else . . . So that happened and then Radika (her daughter) was born. So all this time I was pregnant, I did not enjoy myself. I did not enjoy my pregnancy. Did not enjoy a thing, *a bit* of my life then because he [my husband] wasn't there. I was all alone. *No family, no money, no friends*. You can't even get out of the house. You can't even talk. No phone, no nothing. No TV. No nothing. Like a *slave*.

Krishna was very serious when she explained that she did not enjoy "a bit" of her life or

her pregnancy. Sadly, due to the drudgery she was living in, she attempted to commit suicide:

All I wanted to do when they kept me inside the house and locked up was commit suicide. Kill myself. *Kill myself*, but I didn't know how to kill. One day, I decided to hang myself. But I didn't know how . . . So, I pulled the table in the middle to the room. And then, I found a piece of material [from my sari] . . . Then I put a chair on top of the table and I climbed on top of the chair, on top of the table. Then I tied the [sari] on the ceiling and then I didn't know what I was suppose to tie first . . . Then all of a sudden I hear banging on the door . . . [My mother-in-law] started banging [on the door], so I ran to open the door. I got so scared, nervous, I was shaking! I peed in my pants at that time! But, I just ran to open the door. She started screaming! She asked me, 'Why did you take so long to open the door? What were you doing?' And she grabbed me by the hair; she always grabbed my hair to beat me.

At the time of Radika's birth, Krishna's mother, father and siblings had migrated to California through a family sponsorship. But since Krishna was legally married, she could not move to California. She explained:

Two months after I got married, my parents and sisters and brother migrated to America . . . *Make sure you write that down*. Two months after I got married. Because you know what? They had all the paperwork going on . . . My paperwork was going on also with my mom and them so that I could go to America too, but in the meantime my marriage was arranged. It was because of this that I couldn't join my family. That is why I was left out there [Fiji].

With no immediate family support, Krishna remained with her negligent husband and suffered from severe depression.

Abandonment

The turning point of Krishna's marriage was when her husband abandoned her. She described a series of events that eventually led her to divorce:

[We] were still living with Radika's dad but it was just me and Radika living there and he would be gone. And then one day he decided he was

going to take me to my aunt's house. He said, 'I'm going to take you tonight and drop you there and then tomorrow morning I'm going to come and I'm going to bring the baby. So, he kept Radika and took her to his mom and dad's house . . . So then the next day, he never showed up . . . Kept on waiting and waiting, my aunt and uncle and everyone were just waiting. He *never* showed up.

With her newborn child taken from her, Krishna was extremely distraught. Her husband never came back to her, and tracking him down was a major ordeal. After filing a police report, Krishna waited two difficult weeks to learn about her husband and daughter's whereabouts. She detailed the incident:

So you know how we have *Modesto Bee* [Modesto, California's local newspaper] here . . . so in Fiji, it was the Fiji newspaper. So my uncle brought that in the morning. Then I stood at the edge of the dining table and I was just looking at the paper quickly. *Quickly* because I had a lot of work to do. And as I flipped the paper, then I saw his [my husband's] picture . . . I saw his picture and I was like 'WHAT?' . . . And then I started reading. So here's his picture [on the front page] and it had this paragraph about him. His dad put that down in there and it said that he went to India for further studies for five years and that he missed that opportunity to say goodbye to some of his best friends. And so, this is how much I read. I didn't read the whole thing. As soon as I read this part that he went to India for five years for further studies, oh my God, I passed out! I fainted and I fell on the floor!

After returning to consciousness, Krishna was surrounded by her aunt, uncle and cousins. She then proceeded to show them the newspaper. Frustrated by the turn of events, Krishna's uncle darted to the police station with the newspaper in hand. After explaining the situation to the police, she and her uncle were accompanied by law enforcement to her in-law's house, where Radika was then retrieved from a locked room. Krishna was finally reunited with her daughter.

After the chaotic event with her estranged husband, Krishna quickly filed for divorce. For the next two years, she and her daughter lived with her aunt and uncle. This

was a difficult time for Krishna who was unemployed and a single mother of a young daughter. Her relatives could only house the two for so long, and Krishna had to figure out a way to support herself and her daughter. However, once Krishna's parents found out about their daughter's divorce, they quickly sponsored Krishna and Radika to come to the United States. She recalled on the day she received two plane tickets in the mail that changed her life forever. She explained:

Then I get this package that my parents sent from here. I opened it and I seen tickets. Ticket for me and Radika to fly . . . I showed it to my aunt and uncle and they read it and they were all excited. But, I wasn't excited at all . . . I didn't know what was happening to my life at that time, you know? And then my uncle said, 'No this is real, you're going to America!' . . . And within three days of getting that mail, I had to leave.

Coming to America and Entering the American Work Force

Within three days of receiving the package, Krishna and Radika embarked on their long journey from Fiji to California where they were reunited with Krishna's parents and siblings. For the next several years, they lived at her parent's house in Modesto, California. For Krishna, arriving at Modesto was a complete culture shock. Not only was it her first real encounter with "white people," she was shocked by the way people dressed. She remembered feeling embarrassed at the sight of women in bikinis and explained it took her "a good 3 to 4 months to adjust" to American life.

After getting together her legal documents, Krishna began looking for employment in Modesto. She applied for several jobs and took a position as a housekeeper at a care home for elderly. While Krishna worked, her mother and siblings helped to look after Radika. Even though she was only paid \$3.25 an hour for her labor, Krishna was thrilled to earn a paycheck. This was her first step in financially supporting

herself and her daughter. Eventually, Krishna was given more responsibilities at her work until she was promoted from housekeeping to directly assisting clients. The change in her work responsibility was a positive one for Krishna, and she became passionate about her new role as a caregiver. She explained:

I enjoyed caregiving work more than the housekeeping I was doing. And then I got too close to these elderly people. I got so close to them that it was everything for me . . . It was a good thing to take care of other people.

Krishna continued caregiving until sustaining a back injury at work. She has now settled for “lighter” work as a secretary but expressed that caring for the elderly was an incredibly rewarding experience.

Second Arranged Marriage

While living with her parents, Krishna began witnessing her father’s belligerent behavior all over again. Although she had hoped her father had changed his abusive ways in the United States, he had not. One evening, in a drunken rage Krishna’s father demanded she leave with Radika and never return. The drunken rages continued on for the next month until Krishna’s mother finally suggested that her daughter remarry before things worsened. Once again, with the help of her mother, Krishna experienced yet another arranged marriage. Although the memory and experience of her first marriage made the anticipation of another nerve-wrecking, Krishna agreed to her mother’s advice. After a few months, Krishna’s mother found a perfect Indo-Fijian groom named Raju for her daughter.

Even though Krishna experienced two arranged marriages, the second time around was different, and for the better. Krishna reminisced about her wedding:

The priest came and he did all the things that happen in our [Hindu] custom . . . And then my husband bought me so many nice things and I was just shocked! He opened the bag in front of the priest and everybody and he started giving me all this stuff. He put a ring on me. And, this is all real! He gave me everything real! Real gold bracelet and nothing cheap. He gave me skinny white bangles, bracelets, real earrings, real necklace . . . expensive outfits, *saris* [Indian wrap dress], and all that! Oh my god, I was shocked! All my life everything had been going wrong, you know? Nothing good had happened in my life that I know of . . . I never had a happy day . . . I cried everyday, all my life. I cried, I cried, I cried. That was how my life was.

For Krishna, meeting Raju was a positive, life-changing experience. Not only did he treat her well, he was also kind to Radika. Krishna explained that with Raju she finally felt like a “human-being” rather than a “slave.” She believes her husband’s kindness and affection toward her stems from his personal experience with an abusive father. Krishna explained that her husband encourages her to stand up for herself. “He says you have to stand up! You cannot be quiet like you used to live! You need to stand up!” Raju helps Krishna to not be held back by her gender. Also, living in California and becoming a citizen of the United States has given Krishna a sense of empowerment and strength. She revealed, “America has made me one strong person, that now, I know that I have a life. I have a life and I can talk. I can stand up for myself, and I can change things.” For Krishna, moving to California has changed her life for the better, and for this reason, she does not plan to return to Fiji. She exclaimed, “I don’t mind visiting Fiji once and awhile, but I will never live there again. All my family is here now, and I enjoy my rights here, in America.”

Purchasing a Home and Raising Children in California

Besides being empowered by her status as a citizen of the United States, Krishna

described feeling empowered when she and her husband purchased their first home. After residing in an apartment in Modesto for the first few months of being married, Krishna's and Raju's combined incomes allowed them to make the purchase. Krishna recalled on this moment with excitement:

We started looking for a house and at that time houses were cheap, and the rules and the regulations were not as strict. My income was there, so I got qualified along with my husband . . . So we bought our first house! It was a two-bedroom house, one car garage!

With the comforts of owning their very own home, Krishna and Raju decided to expand their family. Krishna gave birth to their son, Johnny.

Krishna described that both she and her husband are extremely proud of their Indo-Fijian heritage, and passing down their cultural traditions to their children is extremely important to them. Perhaps the most important marker of the Indo-Fijian identity, Fiji Hindi, was passed down to both her children. Radika was already accustomed to Fiji Hindi, which she learned while living with Krishna's parents and siblings upon arrival. Johnny, on the other hand, learned Fiji Hindi from his babysitter, an elderly Indo-Fijian woman whom Krishna had hired while she and her husband worked. From her, Johnny was able to fluently learn Fiji Hindi. Krishna even confessed that her son speaks better Fiji Hindi than she does and that he had learned a great deal from his Indo-Fijian babysitter. Presently, Krishna's children not only connect to their Indo-Fijian roots through Fiji Hindi, they also connected to the Indo-Fijian identity through food. Krishna shared that she taught both of her children how to cook Indo-Fijian foods. Her son, especially, loves to cook. Krishna explained, "Johnny always craves Indian food so he makes it all the time. He loves the food. He makes very good

chicken curry and lamb curry! I am proud of both of my children for knowing about their culture. I hope someday I will have grandchildren and that I can pass on our culture to them.”

Anthropological Silhouette: Malti

Growing Up in Nadi

Malti was born on the Western side of Viti Levu, in the quiet countryside of Nadi. She was raised in a large family with three brothers and seven sisters. Being one of the youngest of her siblings, Malti frequently dodged household chores and found ample time to play. She described experiencing a mostly carefree childhood in Fiji where her main responsibility was focusing on school. But since her family was large, money was often scarce in their household. Malti’s father, who worked as a carpenter, had difficulties making ends meet while her mother did what she could as a housewife-supplementing the family’s survival by growing vegetables and selling them to markets.

Schooling Years

Unlike her mother and father, and even some of her siblings, Malti was afforded the opportunity of going to school. She explained that she was able to attend school because she had become friends with the headmaster’s daughter. Seeing Malti’s potential in academics, the headmaster himself paid for her school fees. Everyday, Malti walked three miles to school and excelled in her academics. She proudly remarked, “I was a smart kid. When I was in third grade, I got an award and skipped fourth grade, and was put straight into fifth grade.” Her favorite subjects included Hindi and science, and she was proud that she had learned to read and write in Hindi. Unfortunately for Malti, her

schooling was cut short due to financial hardships. She explained “I graduated form 4, but I could not go to school anymore because my dad wasn’t working and we did not have any more support.”

While out of school, Malti stayed home with her mother and helped her attend to household chores. Under her mother’s guidance, Malti became highly skilled in the art of managing a household. Before long, marriage was on the horizon for the young woman. Malti explained that her marriage was unique in that it was a “love marriage” and not an arranged marriage. She added that “love” was key to a long-lasting marriage. At the age of 19, Malti’s brother introduced her to an Indo-Fijian man named Vijay living in Suva. After a year of courtship, they were married, and Malti moved to Suva to join her husband.

Moving to Suva, Children, and Remembering the First Coup

Starting a new life in Suva was a shocking yet invigorating experience for Malti. In comparison to rural Nadi, urban Suva was crowded and busy. While living in Suva, Malti gave birth to her three children: two sons and a daughter. Instead of just homemaking for her husband, Malti also acquired the responsibility of motherhood. For the next several years, Malti focused on taking care of her children, while Vijay worked in downtown Suva in a local shop. After working at the shop for a few years, Malti’s husband decided to start a family business. With financial help from his father, Vijay rented a stall in downtown Suva and began selling take-out Chinese food.

But shortly after starting their business, Fiji experienced its first coup and downtown Suva was ransacked. Luckily for Malti and her family, their stall escaped

damages, unlike other Indo-Fijian businesses in the area. Malti attributed this to the fact that their business sold “Chinese” food, instead of “Indian” food. She candidly explained the racialized tension that generated the coup:

It [the coup] was because of the Indians and because of the politics [at that time]. Because Indians were more educated [than indigenous Fijians] and Indians were gaining more political power . . . and they [indigenous Fijians] didn't like it.

She also recollected on a terrifying event that she attended with her small children during the 1987 coup:

When the first coup happened, I was in Sukuna Park. We [Indo-Fijians and Fijians] were all gathered together because they were going to release some politicians that had been held over. They were going to release them and have a celebration . . . and I was with my kids and my sister! We all went together, and then we saw big tall [indigenous Fijian] men! They started beating [with their fists] whoever came in front of the . . . And people, out of fear, started running! And when we saw that, we just held our kids and we ran!

But this was only the beginning of the coup. Malti described high levels of panic and chaos in Fiji. She recollected:

And the army came in . . . the Fiji army got control of everything and they put a curfew. No one was supposed to go outside. Nobody was working. Everything was shut down and we never went outside . . . if any person went outside they [Fijians] would snatch your purse! They [Fijians] would snatch your necklace!

Malti continued with her testimony of the events of the 1987 coups. She recalled on houses being pillaged, and a horrific incident involving her Indo-Fijian neighbor:

Three houses away from ours, there was this lady who was raped by three [indigenous Fijian] men . . . She was raped and it was so sad . . . an Indian woman . . . she was all alone at home and she cried and yelled and finally people came to her rescue, but they [indigenous Fijian men] were gone. They put a cloth in her mouth. They tied her up. She had bruises on her face . . . everyone was so scared to go anywhere. It was *very* scary.

This incident instilled fear in Malti and she became very guarded with her daughters. They were never to be outside alone, and they were no longer allowed to walk to school by themselves.

Eventually, tensions subdued and people returned to their regular routines. But even during the first coup, returning “back to normalcy” was only a myth (Trkna 2008). Fear penetrated the lives of the Indo-Fijian community. Although Vijay re-opened for business, Malti was frightened for herself and her family. After experiencing the chaos in Sukuna Park and learning of her neighbor’s rape, Malti was ready to migrate to the United States. However, her family had already been sponsored in 1981 by her sister-in-law, and Malti and her family would have to patiently await their entry to the United States.

From Suva City to “Fairyland”

Managing to survive the dark periods of the coups, Malti and her family waited 12 years for the approval of their paperwork. In 1994, Malti, her husband and three children would board an airplane for the first time. They made the long journey to San Francisco where they were then greeted by Vijay’s parents and taken to their house in Modesto. Malti described her first night in California:

We came; it was night . . . there were so many lights outside. *So many lights out!* It was like we were in some *fairyland* (laughs) . . . Fiji was always dark . . . and then we moved to the house my mother in-law and father in-law bought for us. And they were staying there already so we moved there at night with all of our bags and we had the bedroom there, and the bed was set! Everything was ready for us! *Everything* was ready! I had my two sons, so they shared a room together. And, my daughter, she was six years old, and she shared a bed with my sister in-law.

With the help of family, the move from Fiji to California was made a little easier. What was difficult, however, was finding employment. With her limited work experience in Fiji, Malti remained jobless in Modesto for two years. As for Vijay, finding a decent job was just as challenging. Feeling like he had no other options, Vijay settled for a job as an ice cream truck driver, which he despised. Furthermore, his wages were inadequate to support the entire family. This situation led Vijay to once again ask his father for financial help with starting a brand new family business. Vijay's father agreed, and together the couple started a new business selling Indian goods. But, starting a business in California had its own set of challenges. Malti sacrificed spending quality time with her children, who took a backseat to the everyday demands of American life. This was a difficult transition for Malti who prior to migrating had dedicated most of her time to raising her children.

Raising Children in California

When Malti arrived to California, her children were all under the age of ten, and one of the main reasons for emigrating from Fiji was to offer them a better life. Malti felt that the United States would allow her children to have better opportunities for education and jobs. This in turn would enhance their quality of life. Thus, she encouraged her children to go to college. Although Malti's eldest son decided not to go to college, he decided to work full-time for the family's business, a decision Malti fully supports. Malti's other's son is a graduate of ITT Technical Institute and is now a successful computer technician. Her daughter attended Phoenix University and also helps with the

family business. Malti's is proud of all three of her children and explained that they all have strong work ethics.

Malti's children are still very connected to their Indo-Fijian identity, despite emigrating as youths. All three of her children are fluent speakers of Fiji Hindi and are aware of their ancestor's indentured past. Additionally, Malti passed on the art of Indo-Fijian cooking to her daughter, who she raves is an exceptional cook like herself. Besides having less quality time with her children while they were younger, raising children in California has been a positive experience for Malti. She is now focusing her efforts on passing down aspects of the Indo-Fijian culture to her grandchildren such Fiji Hindi and food recipes.

Converting to Christianity

Both Malti and her husband grew up in religious Hindu households and wanted to continue their religious traditions for their children. But, after arriving to California, Malti learned about Christianity and connected to the faith. She explained:

I'm going to say, you know, about how I came to the Lord . . . My mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law- they were all Christian. They use to go to church. So slowly . . . I started to go to church . . . I really liked it. I started myself in the choir . . . and I fully gave my life to the Lord. And I gave myself to the Lord and accepted Jesus as a savior of my life.

Although the church that Malti first attended in Modesto was primarily white, the church she now attends caters to the Indo-Fijian and Indian community. She explained, "We have an Indian community church on Sundays . . . this Sunday I'm talking . . . I preach in Hindi once a month. And my pastor preaches in both Hindi and English." Malti even

described owning a Hindi Bible, which she ordered from India. She explained how her congregation empowers her:

You know, I was *very* shy. As I grew up, I was a very shy person. I would hardly talk. I would hardly talk to people. When I came to the Lord, he gave me the opportunity to open myself up, just like how I opened myself up to you and now I can share my life. I can share whatever I know with other people.

Not only is Malti more extroverted since finding her new faith and supportive congregation, she also attributes her family's business success and the purchasing of their home to converting to Christianity: "When I gave my life to the Lord, we got our business. And when we got this business we bought a house!"

Proud to Be an American

In 2004, Malti and her entire family applied to become naturalized citizens of the United States. After studying meticulously for their exams, the family became citizens of the United States. Malti was ecstatic in gaining the rights and privileges of her adopted homeland. She described:

It was tough to memorize all those things . . . you had to remember several things . . . it was good, though. It [citizenship] has its benefits. It is good because when you have citizenship, then you can have some place where you can stand and have a *place* . . . you know you are American . . . Just like America accepted me, I have to accept America . . . I am an American citizen!

Additionally, Malti described what "being American," meant to her:

When you are American, you have freedom . . . You can live your life. *You can move forward*. You can take better steps in your life and not get stuck in the past. *Just move forward* . . . and by doing that for yourself, you can help others achieve a better life.

Migrating to California has allowed Malti and her family to “move forward” and “achieve a better life” just as they hoped for.

Visiting Fiji

Since migrating, Malti makes frequent trips back to Viti Levu to visit her relatives that still reside there. She also makes visits to Fiji for her family’s business. For Malti, Fiji is still a true paradise despite its political instability and “hatred” toward Indo-Fijians. She explained, “Sometimes I go to Fiji, just for 10 days to relax.” Malti now considers Fiji especially relaxed in comparison to life in California. She explained:

Fiji life is relaxed. Even though you don’t work that much . . . But here in America, you have to work hard, struggle, and then you have to pay so many bills, and then sometimes you don’t see your husband or your children when you have to work different shifts . . . that is why we go to Fiji . . . just to relax.

Although Malti loves her country of birth, she has no plans of returning to Fiji. She explained that even though Fiji is in a calm state, a coup could potentially erupt at any time. Added to this, Malti was also fearful of tropical storms that could arrive without a moment’s notice. Fiji is located in an area that is highly prone to the occurrences of tropical cyclones. In fact, since 1840, 153 tropical storms have been recorded in Fiji (Chung 1987) and Malti’s parents have been victims of such storms. Malti recalled on a storm that nearly claimed their lives. She described:

You know, my husband says all the time, ‘When I retire, I will buy a house there [in Fiji]’ and says we will go there. And I say, ‘No! I’m scared of hurricanes.’ Too many hurricanes in Fiji and they would only come by one part of the island, where we lived, called the Western side. There were lots of storms in Nadi. When I was married, my mom and dad went through this hurricane, when [my dad] was sick and paralyzed. He was in bed when the hurricane came [and] they didn’t want to move. The roof flew away. Then part of the roof went down and [my mother] put my

dad under the bed. When she was just getting out from under the bed one of the beams fell on my mom's head and [on] her back . . . she had a deep cut on her head [and] had a lot of bleeding . . . but she saved my dad!

Although her parents survived the natural disaster, Malti still fears potential storms.

Anthropological Silhouette: Priya

Early Life in Fiji

Priya was born in 1953 in rural Nausori and lived nearby the Rewa River. Like many other Indo-Fijians in her community, Priya grew up in poverty. Her father, a farmer without education, had difficulties providing for his wife and four children. Poverty had kept Priya from receiving a secondary education; however, she was proud to have at the very least a primary level education, where she learned to read and write in Hindi and English.

As the youngest and only daughter in her family, Priya described receiving considerable affection from her parents. Priya spent much of her early childhood with her maternal grandmother, a former *girmitiya*, who had lived to be over 100 years old. She often told Priya stories about her life. She recalled on her memories with her grandmother:

She told me stories about India. She was not even married in India but they [maternal grandparents] came in the same boat and they got married in Fiji. My *nani* (maternal grandmother) was really sad when she came to Fiji. They had no life. They were missing their life in India, like their childhood. So they came [to Fiji] and had to work the whole day and they had been whipped by the supervisors . . . the British people. They worked under the British . . . My grandma worked on the sugarcane farm . . . Life was very hard for them. They [British] made them *slaves*. They worked hard on the sugarcane farm.

Considering the tone of Priya's voice, it was apparent that life as a *girmitiya* was full of pain and sorrow. Although the *girmitiyas* had suffered tremendously, Priya acknowledged their resiliency. "They worked hard and they made a little bit of money, but they survived."

Marriage, Family, and Tensions from the Coup

Priya's teenage years were spent preparing to become a wife. Her mother taught her how to cook, clean and manage a household. When Priya turned 18 years old, she married a handsome Indo-Fijian man, and the young bride moved across the island from Nausori to the western side of Ba to join him. It was there that Priya gave birth to her children, two daughters. Priya referred to motherhood as her most important role in Fiji, where her main focus was looking after her daughters and making sure they received a good education.

During the coups, Priya felt tension but for the most part, felt safe in the outskirts of Ba. For Priya, the coup was generated by racialized politics. She exclaimed:

They [indigenous Fijians] did not want them [Indians] to become the big bosses, president, vice president . . . They [native Fijians] said they owned Fiji and that it was *their* country . . . but I don't think so because people from *India* came and built it. When they came, they [Indians] had to work with sugar and then they [Indians] used their minds to build a house, a school . . . they [Indians] cleaned all of Fiji. It used to be a jungle . . . so they cleaned everything, worked in the fields, and made money. They helped to make Fiji.

For Priya, the *girmitiyas* such as her grandmother had made major contributions to Fiji, however, with the expiry of their land leases, Priya and her husband were ready to leave Fiji. Also, with the coups, there were no guarantees for their futures. Thus, emigrating seemed a better option than risking their livelihoods in Fiji. As a result of the coups,

Priya asked her brother to sponsor them to California. Without hesitation, he quickly filed their paperwork.

Moving to Modesto

In 1994, after seven years of waiting to come to California, Priya and her entire family arrived to the San Francisco International Airport where she was reunited with her brother after nine long years. Ironically though, it was a bitter experience for her two daughters, who after departing realized that they could no longer spend time with their *aji* (paternal grandmother) and *aja* (maternal grandmother). But the thought of her daughters remaining in Fiji was distressing for Priya and she mentioned the difficulties they could have possibly faced if they remained in Fiji:

[At the time] Fiji didn't have many rights for ladies . . . they [women] just went to school, and then after they could not find jobs and so they stayed home . . . men would get hired even though women would be more educated, but they would hire men first . . . and over their they [Indo-Fijian women] get married at 18, 19.

These were real fears Priya had for her daughters. She wanted something more than a domestic life for them, and the move to California would offer her daughters the opportunities to become independent women. Currently, both of Priya's daughters have obtained associate degrees and are working in the medical field.

Employment and Buying a House

Staying with her brother was only a temporary living arrangement until Priya and her husband could find employment. Both quickly found work in low-wage paying jobs. Priya explained, "I did housekeeping. I worked in a motel and then I worked in a hospital [housekeeping] I worked 11 years here [in the United States]. Work in the hospital

wasn't so hard . . . but motel work was harder because they gave us too many rooms with not enough employees.” As for Priya's husband, moving to the United States brought challenges to his career as an accountant. If he wanted to continue on as an accountant in the United States, he would have to repeat his education and training. But, with a wife and two daughters to take care of, Priya's husband found a job as a kitchen helper at a local hospital instead. After a few months of working at the hospital, he applied for a new job with a corporation and was hired as an agent. Eventually, he worked his way up to a managerial position where he started to make a decent living.

After only six months of living with her brother's family, Priya and her family moved into an apartment and then their first home, “We got the jobs and then we moved into the apartment . . . we stayed there from 1994 to 1996 and then in 1996 we bought this house.” This was a huge success for Priya and her husband because she described that Indo-Fijians like herself had no land in Fiji and that being able to purchase their own home provided them with a sense of security and establishment in California. Priya described, “In Fiji, since the land did not belong to us, but to the Fijians, there was no sense to build a house because as soon as the leases would expire, then we would have to breakdown our house because it would still be on their [indigenous Fijian landowners] property.”

The Return to Fiji

Since migrating to California, Priya has visited Fiji three times. She explained that after arriving to the United States, her husband vowed to never return to Fiji. Priya explained:

When he came here he was happy . . . because he struggled all his life. When he was really young, his mom died. Then my father-in-law got remarried, so then these kids were harassed by a new, young stepmother. She was not nice when they were young . . . He said ‘I’m not going back!’ but he went twice to visit!

Even a ruthless stepmother could not keep Priya’s husband away from his native homeland, his father or siblings. As for Priya, visiting Fiji is enough and she has no desire to move back. She exclaimed, “There are more rights here, in this country [United States of America] than in Fiji.” These rights provide Priya and her family the consistency they desired, which was the most convincing factor in their decision to remain in California.

Citizenship: Becoming American

Knowing that she wanted to permanently reside in the United States, Priya, along with her husband and two daughters, became naturalized citizen of the United States in 2001. Priya described the advantages of their new status and exclaimed, “The benefit of becoming a citizen, [it means] that you can travel anywhere with your passport without a visa . . . and then you can sponsor your family . . . and that you can vote.” Although these were some of the answers that Priya had rehearsed for her exam, becoming a citizen also meant being able to offer her family a better life. She expressed “It means a better life for my kids, my grandkids . . . they don’t have to suffer the way we did when we were their age! So, they don’t have to suffer like that. Like, we didn’t have the things that they have *now* when we were their age.”

A Visit to the Motherland India

Priya and her husband began traveling the world together and consider this luxury as an opportunity she gained after arriving to California. With two incomes to pay for travel, the couple visited New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Singapore. Priya also visited India after being invited by family friends whose relatives reside in New Delhi. Priya decided to take the opportunity and made the long 17-hour flight from California to the motherland India. Although excited to visit, Priya described being overwhelmed by the country of her ancestral roots. She explained, “India is very well now. But India is *very* crowded . . . *very* crowded! There are a lot of prayer places and lots of religious things . . . The temples are very crowded that they can’t see the statues. People are also very poor in India. It is very sad.” Priya offered a comparison between India, Fiji and the United States of America, explaining, “Fiji is better than India, but America is better than both Fiji and India . . . I am very happy that I live in America because my life is better than most of the people who live in Fiji and India.”

Raising Grandchildren

Priya has two grandchildren from her eldest daughter. As a grandmother, Priya has taken the responsibility of teaching her grandchildren about their Indo-Fijian background and culture. Priya explained:

I am teaching Hindi to my grandkids now . . . they understand, but they can only speak a little . . . They know how to say *roti* (bread), *thercari* (curry), *bhindi* (okra), *bhaji* (leafy greens) . . . they like *gulab jamun* (dessert) and *laddoos* (dessert) . . . they like Indian clothes . . . They dance and sing from watching Zee TV.

Through teaching her grandchildren Fiji Hindi, exposing them to the array of Indian foods, and introducing them to Bollywood culture through satellite television, Priya plays an active role in transferring the Indo-Fijian identity to them. Furthermore, Priya's grandchildren's natural curiosity and pride about their identity has helped in preserving aspects of the Indo-Fijian identity in their family.

Anthropological Silhouette: Asha

Growing Up in Suva, Fiji

Asha began the story of her life in Fiji by first describing the death of her father when she was only three years old. Although she had no particular memories of her father, she recalled the difficulties of his passing for her mother and seven siblings. The loss of Asha's father not only caused emotional distress on her family but also severe financial restraints. As a housewife and newly single parent, Asha's mother devised a plan to earn an income. Asha explained:

My dad was an engineer. He built roads and he had his own business until he passed away. But after he died, we didn't have much money . . . We ended up selling all the tractors and everything. Then [with the money] my mom built a two story so she could rent it out.

Her mother's cleverness helped to sustain the family for a while. Furthermore, to offset the cost of food, Asha and her siblings spent much of their time working on their brother-in-law's farm in an exchange for vegetables and grains. Sometimes Asha would go to the farmer's market with her brother-in-law to sell the vegetables. She described:

In Fiji, my brother-in-law would take his vegetables, every Friday and Saturday to the market and sell it. I loved going to the market with him! I would go over to his school right after school on Friday. He lived very far away. I had to take two buses. I was only nine years old.

Added to her delightful memories of the farmer markets, Asha also described enjoying the company of her friendly Indo-Fijian neighbors:

When I was growing up . . . you just walked over to the neighbors and you didn't have to say hey, are you going to be home? You just walked up and they welcomed you whenever you went over. And over here you can't just go to the neighbors . . . the neighbors would come over, like Friday nights and Saturday nights . . . They would go to the market on Saturday, so all the neighbors would go to the market and they will bring all the *bhaji* (leafy greens) and bean and whatever and they'll sit in the front porch and help each other clean it, and peel it, and all that, and then there were times when neighbors would come and all the kids would come. And while the women were doing that, the kids would all play. We had different Indian games like *buli danda* [similar to cricket] that we would play together.

Asha enjoyed spending time with the Indo-Fijian community, but her days in Fiji were limited upon her migration to California.

Leaving Home at 12

When Asha was 12 years old, her maternal grandmother suggested she move to California to live with her uncle. Not only would Asha be able to receive an American education, she could also one day sponsor her family to come to the United States. Asha who was far from keen on the idea of leaving Fiji, explained:

I didn't come here because my parents were here. I came because my grandmother lived with my uncle . . . my dad had passed away, so my mom was living with all her eight children and my grandma thought it would be a better opportunity for us all to come. So, when my grandma went back from the United States to Fiji, to visit, she tried to get my sister to come but her visa didn't go through. So, she only had one week left so she said, 'Why don't I try hers [Asha].' So when we applied, in like two days I got my visa. And, then I had to come to the United States. I wasn't happy about coming because I didn't want to leave my mom.

Asha vividly remembered the day she left Fiji. It was a cold night in December of 1983 and she arrived at the San Francisco International Airport, where she was greeted by her

uncle and aunt and taken to their home in South San Francisco. She described feeling tremendously anxious about her departure. She recalled:

I didn't really want to come. I didn't know what the United States was . . . what it was going to look like but I *had* to come. I was *only* 12 years old and I remember coming here and crying *every* single night for about 2 years straight, and I cried and cried and cried because I wanted to go back home and be with my mom.

But Asha explained that she could not return to Fiji because she was given the obligation of sponsoring her family for “better education, better environment, and growth.”

Moreover, the possibility of returning to Fiji was further diminished after her adoption.

Although Asha originally arrived to the United States under a student visa, it was her adoption by her uncle that allowed her to remain in the country. Asha explained:

So what my uncle did was he adopted me and I needed to be adopted before I turned 16, because my student visa wasn't going to last that long so in order for me to stay, he needed to adopt me so I could live here. So like two days before 16, he adopted me but in order for my adoption to go through faster, on the paperwork they had said that both my parents were deceased.

Asha's adoption was expedited because of the fabrication. Fearful of the law, neither Asha nor her uncle ever attempted to sponsor the rest of their family. She explained:

So, if I were to apply for my brother and sisters, their thing would have said their mom is alive and mine would have said they are both deceased, so I couldn't apply for them.

Although her siblings never had the opportunity of migrating to the United States, two of Asha's sisters migrated to Vancouver, Canada after the coups, where they now live as permanent residents. Having spent so many years separated from her siblings, Asha visits them often to help make up for lost time.

Growing Up in South San Francisco

Asha spent the next several years of her life living with her uncle, aunt, and cousins in South San Francisco. Immediately after arriving to California, Asha was enrolled at a local high school instead of junior high. As an immigrant, she was instantly enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes; however, the classes did not apply to her. She explained:

In Fiji, they teach you English. So I knew English but I still had to take the classes but then when I took the classes they were like what (laughs)! So then I had to just take regular English classes.

While Asha excelled in academics, socializing with her peers was difficult. Asha's high school, which was incredibly diverse, included a growing number of Indo-Fijian students. Her efforts to initiate friendships with Indo-Fijian girls were met with hostility. The girls bullied Asha for her fashion choices, but she ignored the mistreatment. She explained:

I don't like to follow what other people do. I have my own personality and I'm not going to change because someone says I need to change . . . I just stopped hanging out with people like that.

Asha's strength and character allowed her to move on and make new friends.

After graduating high school at the age of sixteen, her uncle enrolled her into accounting classes. Seeing Asha's potential for success, he hoped that one day she would become a successful Certified Public Accountant (CPA) like himself. But Asha found accounting tedious. Instead, she applied for a job at a private elementary school where she was offered a position as a teacher's aide. Through this job, Asha decided to dedicate her life to mentoring underprivileged children. To this day, Asha works with underprivileged children and plans to continue doing so until her retirement.

Marriage and American-Born Children

Since the age of 16, Asha described receiving several marriage proposals from various Indo-Fijian families and suitors. But marriage was not on the young woman's mind. Asha focused her time and energy on her education and career. It was not until Asha turned 21 that she had met her future husband, an Indo-Fijian man named Arjun. The couple fell in love and married, and Asha moved to Modesto to join her husband and new stepdaughter. In the years to follow, Asha and Arjun would have three children together: two daughters and a son. At this point in Asha's life, her main focus was raising her stepdaughter and three children. As a mentor, she instilled the value of education in her children, and, as a result of her influence, all her children are attending major universities in and out of California with their futures looking prosperous.

Furthermore, Asha and her husband have instilled aspects of the Indo-Fijian identity in their children. For example, Asha explained that her children openly embrace their Indo-Fijian roots. Asha's daughters, Chandra and Pinky, are especially connected to their cultural background:

My beliefs, my faith is something that I passed on . . . The *pujas* (Hindu prayers) I would do in the morning, my girls do them now and the mantras and things like that, they do it now. And they like the clothing, [and] cooking. Pinky makes *bhindi* (okras) and *roti* (bread).

Asha's daughters also enjoy Hindi music and continue to share their love for it despite being away at college:

Like the other day, Chandra went online and started sending [emails of] songs to us. When my kids were little I would always listen to the Hindi songs so they would know them. And now she is sending me all these songs that she use to listen to when she was little and then Pinky started it too . . . they are missing home.

Readily having access to Hindi music via the Internet allows Asha's daughters to stay connected to their Indo-Fijian identity.

Returning to the Homeland

Since 1990, Asha has visited Fiji several times, and her most recent visit was in 2010. Asha described that between her first visit back to Fiji in 1990 to her latest visit in 2010, the island had faced major developments. The roads, streets, houses and people that she once knew had all disappeared. Although Fiji is no longer the Fiji she once known, Asha still plans to continue her visit to her native country. However, she has no desire of permanently returning to Fiji. Asha exclaimed, "this [California] is home for me now. I have built a life here and my family is here. So, I don't mind visiting Fiji, but I will never move back there." With no intentions of ever moving back to Fiji, Asha is content with her life in the United States.

Anthropological Silhouette: Sheela

Early Life, Memories of Fiji

Sheela was born in 1963 in Nausori, Viti Levu and grew up in a small house with her mother, father, and four siblings. Being the youngest child in her family, Sheela described her childhood as "laid back" and "carefree." Her best memories of Fiji revolved around her favorite foods. She raved about succulent mangoes, sweet crab and tasty coconuts. Although these foods were abundant in Fiji's natural environment, Sheela grew up in poverty. Sheela's mother, a housewife with no education, and Sheela's father, a sugar cane worker with little education, had major financial difficulties. And to make matter worse for Sheela's father, work was not always available for him in Fiji. When

this was the case, he would go to New Zealand to partake in seasonal low-waged agricultural work. Sheela described that having her father away from home was difficult on her family and that her father hoped to find employment that would keep him closer to home.

The Move to Colusa County

With little opportunities for employment in Fiji, Sheela's father decided to move his family to the United States of America. In 1969, a six-year-old Sheela and her entire family left Fiji to live in a small agricultural town in Colusa County, California.

Sponsored by her uncle (mother's brother), he encouraged the family to migrate to California since opportunities for steady agricultural work were plentiful. But, the move to California was shocking for Sheela who realized she no longer could spend time with her favorite aunt who she had left behind in Fiji. This was a traumatic experience for Sheela not only because she left her aunt behind, it was also the last time she would ever see her aunt who passed away after her emigration from Fiji.

Within months of their arrival, Sheela's uncle, who was also an agricultural worker, helped her entire family find employment in the farming industry. Even though Sheela was only a little girl at the time, she worked side-by-side with her family in the fields. She described:

The work was hard . . . the way we worked. We worked really hard with our parents . . . And farm life is hard. It is not easy being in the direct sunlight with no trees.

Although work was strenuous and difficult, the combined income of the household allowed the family to quickly save up money. Eventually, after a year of working in the fields, Sheela's family moved into their own home in Colusa County.

Schooling

Immediately after arriving to California, Sheela was enrolled at a local elementary school. She had never gone to school and did not speak English. She described being terrified for her first day of kindergarten. Learning English was a major challenge for Sheela but luckily her eldest sister, an intermediate English speaker was able to tutor her. As for Sheela's parents, they could not help her with school. Both were poor English speakers. Sheela's mother only knew basic words such as "yes," "no," and "hello," and Sheela's father could hold a conversation in English if necessary. In fact, Sheela's father scorned English and made a rule that while at home, no one was allowed to speak in English. Sheela explained, "My dad said 'I will never speak to you in English!' He *never* did!" By allowing only Fiji Hindi to be spoken in their home, Sheela's father was helping to preserve his family's native language.

The Move to Modesto and High School Years

In 1978, Sheela's family moved from Colusa County to Modesto, California. This decision was intentional. Sheela's eldest sister was recently married to an Indo-Fijian man and moved to Modesto to live with him. After learning about various job opportunities in the Central Valley, Sheela's father moved the rest of the family to Modesto. Sheela was not thrilled with this decision and described feeling "very unhappy" about leaving the countryside. She had grown to love Colusa County and

moving away from her uncle, aunt, and cousins was difficult. She was also shocked to move from a small rural town to a much bigger city. To make matters worse for Sheela, she was also about to enter high school, an experience she described as “horrible.” Not only did Sheela describe having difficulties with her academics, especially with English and math, she also described being bullied by a group of girls at her school. By her senior year, she had given up on high school. She believed having a job and money was more important than an education.

Marriage

Sheela’s parents discussed the topic of marriage with her when she was still in high school. Sheela exclaimed that her father never encouraged her or her sisters to go to college as he had with her two brothers. Instead, Sheela’s father wanted his daughters married. She lamented:

I wish my dad told me, “Hey go to school and get your education.’ I wish he was more like that . . . he never did all of that. He wanted me married. He wanted me married at 17.

But Sheela did not marry until she was 19 years old, when her aunt introduced to her to her future husband. After meeting her potential groom once, Sheela was married to her Indo-Fijian husband Ajay, who at the time had recently migrated to California.

Employment

Sheela found her first job during her sophomore year of high school. She was hired as a busser at a Mexican restaurant. Sheela worked at the restaurant for several years before being hired at her current job of over 25 years as a housekeeper at a hospital. While housekeeping, she had applied for other jobs and found employment as a secretary.

But Sheela described that her lack of computer skills resulted in being “let-go” from the job. This was a point of contention for Sheela who described having low self-esteem when it came to computers and technology. However, Sheela exclaimed that she might give computers another chance in the future and that it is never “too late” to go back to school.

Child-Rearing

Sheela and her husband have two daughters, and both are currently living outside of Modesto. Both of Sheela’s daughters are California State University graduates, something she and her husband are very proud of. Since Sheela never graduated high school or attended college, she encouraged her daughters to focus on their education. She explained:

I do housekeeping . . . if I *had* the choice, I wouldn’t do it! But it’s not hard money. I’m comfortable where I am . . . but I would never want my daughters to do that ever!

For Sheela and her husband, raising children in California also means instilling in them values found in both the Indo-Fijian culture and the American culture. For example, Sheela described that she was strict with her daughter’s while they were growing up just like her father was with her:

In a way I was glad that he was strict, maybe it kept me from trouble . . . I was strict but in a difference sense. Cause I always laid it on them, ‘Look how I was raised!’

Sheela’s daughters were aware of the strict Indo-Fijian culture that their mother came from. For instance, Sheela’s father refused to speak to Sheela in English; he also refused to speak English to his grandchildren. Sheela explained:

He refused to speak English to us and he told my youngest one, Kayla, ‘I will never speak to you in English because you have got to learn your language!’ She was weak at speaking the language. Thank God he was strict because I felt Kayla learn more Hindi because of him too.

She recognized that it was her father’s way of making sure that the future generations of their family knew something about their cultural roots. For Sheela’s daughters, they yearn to be connected to their Indo-Fijian identity and Sheela elaborated that her daughter blames her for not speaking to them in Hindi at home: “She blames me! ‘You didn’t tell us more or teach us! Oh, you talk English’!”

Converting to Catholicism

Although Sheela grew up in a religious Hindu home, she later converted to Catholicism. Sheela explained that she learned about the Catholic religion from her eldest daughter’s best friend. With her, Sheela’s daughter had attended many Catholic functions such as volunteering to feed the hungry, and other charity events. Sheela’s husband was so impressed with “all the good” that he decided to attend mass and urged Sheela to come as well. With an open mind, Sheela went to mass and enjoyed her experience there. She began regularly attending church and described seeing many positive changes in her and her family’s life. For instance, Sheela’s husband quit drinking alcohol and is living a much healthier life. Also, Sheela and her husband renewed their vows and are enjoying watching their daughters grow into strong, independent women.

Sponsoring Family During the Coups

Sheela had a limited understanding of Indo-Fijian history. In fact, she never knew that Indians were indentured to Fiji and that her ancestors were *girmitiyas*. She

exclaimed, “My dad never told me we were *slaves!*” Sheela was shocked to find out that Indians were indentured servants in Fiji. Her husband who was present during the conversation confirmed that Sheela’s ancestors were indentured. Ajay recalled having talked to Sheela’s father about his family’s *girit* past. This then led Sheela to recall on sponsoring family members from Fiji to the United States:

Well, I will be honest . . . I said to him [points to Ajay] ‘Hey, why don’t you call on at least one of your family members here?’ So he sponsored his brother’s family . . . When he came we had to run around a lot to immigration trying to explain why they wanted to stay here and they kept asking him why he wanted to stay here and he said the coup was going on in Fiji.

Sheela was happy to have the family at her house and described feeling empathy toward them, especially since they also had two young daughters. She also remembered being sponsored and housed by her own uncle and Sheela was happy to return the favor to her brother-in-law.

No Return, Yet

Since migrating to the United States, Sheela has not been back to Fiji. She exclaimed:

I haven’t been back because I have a little bit of a phobia . . . the day we got on the plane was scary. There was a lot of turbulence and that day we thought we were going to die.

The fear of crashing that day created a phobia of flying for Sheela, which still remains with her today. But, Sheela’s hopes to conquer her fear of flying so she can one day show her daughters the country of her birth.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the data collected for the study in the form of anthropological silhouettes, which chronicles the lives of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California. The silhouettes showcased a diverse set of experiences and perspective amongst the women. Although the women's experiences are diverse, it becomes apparent after reading all the silhouettes that common themes arise amongst their experiences as Indo-Fijian immigrant women living in Modesto. The next chapter provides a discussion to the study, which focuses on the major commonalities and themes found amongst the women's experiences. It also describes the implications and contributions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the anthropological silhouettes that chronicle the lives of five Indo-Fijian immigrant women residing in Modesto, California. The silhouettes offer a glimpse into the women's lives as they once lived them in Fiji to their eventual migration and transition to life in California. When read individually, the silhouettes showcase a diverse set of experiences amongst the women. They indicate that migration is a personal experience and that the women are not a homogenous group; they are *individuals* with *unique* experiences and perspectives. At the same time, when read collectively, the silhouettes reveal common experiences and perspectives as Indo-Fijian immigrant women. This chapter explores the major commonalities and themes, and concludes with a discussion of the implications and contributions of the research.

Push Factors: Economic and Political

Collectively, the anthropological silhouettes highlight that economic and socio-political factors pushed the women's emigration from Fiji. Fathers were identified as the sole wage-earners in their households, which created severe financial constraints for their families. Although mothers were typically not wage-earners, their contributions were vital to their families' livelihoods. Their responsibilities included but were not limited to: managing the domestic household, child-rearing, working in the fields, and producing and processing food for consumption. Inadequate finances, in combination with large families, presented economic hardships that affected the women's lives. Both Malti and Priya were unable to progress educationally because of the high cost of school fees.

These women had little choice but to stay at home with their mothers and focus on the art of domesticity. Krishna described growing up in poverty and lacking basic necessities such as clothing, water and electricity. Lacking water and electricity was stressful and added extra responsibilities for the then young Krishna, who spent a great deal of her time at the Rewa River washing clothes and dishes, and fetching water to be used at home.

Economic burdens and constraints not only affected the women's lives in Fiji, they directly propelled their emigration. As a divorced, single mother with "*no family, no money, no friends,*" Krishna migrated to Modesto in 1980, where she joined her parents and siblings. With her family's support, Krishna re-built her life. She found employment that allowed her to support her daughter. She eventually purchased a home with her husband. Doing so empowered Krishna, especially given her past in Fiji. Asha also departed from Fiji in 1983 due to economic hardships. She emigrated to alleviate her mother's financial stress caused by raising eight children on her own and to ultimately sponsor her family for "better education, better environment and growth." Finally, Sheela migrated in 1969 with her family because of the lack of job opportunities for her father in Fiji. Although the focus in this thesis has been on women's lives, to effectively assess their decisions to emigrate, family structures and the economic resources available to both men and women must come under investigation.

Comingled with economic reasons for emigrating from Fiji were also socio-political motives. As explored in the second chapter, Indo-Fijians have been politically marginalized in Fiji since they first arrived. Indo-Fijians were deterred from participating

in Fiji's politics due to racialized sentiment and the fear of Indian domination in the nation's politics. Malti and Priya expressed the sentiment that political instability in Fiji had solidified their desire to depart their country of birth. The coups led both women to feel uncertain about their future lives if they remained in Fiji. Malti was afraid for herself and the safety of daughters, and Priya expressed her worries about the expiration of her husband's land lease. As landless people, land leases were vital to Indo-Fijian survival in Fiji. Without the political right to own land and with landlords refusing to renew existing land leases to their tenants, many Indo-Fijians thought they had no place in Fiji. Thus, the potential risks of migrating to California were offset by the present risks in Fiji while they lived there. Moreover, decisions to emigrate from Fiji were warranted especially after reflecting on Fiji's history. Both Malti and Priya's families emigrated in 1994, which enabled them to escape the 2000 and 2006 coups. Furthermore, Priya and her family departed the islands just three years prior to the 1997 expiry of land leases in Fiji. They were able to avoid the possibility of being internally displaced in Fiji and living in one of Fiji's squatter settlements.

The Nature of Migration: Family Sponsorship

Another theme that emerged from the silhouettes was family-sponsored migration. All the women were sponsored to the United States by relatives already established in California. Each woman had either consanguineal (blood) or affinal (kin by marriage) relatives who sponsored their relocation to the United States. Krishna was sponsored by her parents, Malti by her sister-in-law, Priya by her brother, and both Asha and Sheela were sponsored by their uncles. With the help of these relatives and through

the U.S. Family Reunification Program, the women and their families obtained legal entrance into the United States. The program offers legal entry into the United States off two broad subcategories including immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and family sponsorship according to preference categories (Ramah McKay 2003).

Their kin networks not only helped the women gain legal entry to the United States, but they supported the women and their families as they transitioned to life in California. Relatives provided shelter for the women and their families until they were financially capable of moving into their own households. For instance, Malti's in-laws bought a large house for her family to live in, which was also fully furnished with all the necessities. Moreover, Asha's uncle helped her family find employment and Krishna's siblings offered free childcare for her daughter Radika. These relatives provided vital systems of support for the women and their families. Such support in turn enabled them to experience a relatively smoother transition to life in California than those without established kinship networks in a receiving country.

Reuniting and Separating From Family

Another theme that appeared in the silhouettes was that of family separation and reunification. As previously described, relatives helped the women and their families gain legal entrance into the United States, which was not only to provide them with better social, political and economic opportunities than Fiji could, but *also* to simply reunite with their relatives. For example, Priya who was sponsored by her brother described being overjoyed after reuniting with him after nine long years and Krishna was relieved to reunite with her parents and siblings after being abandoned by her

husband in Fiji. While reuniting with family was a joyous occasion for the women, it was only one side of the migration coin. The other reality that the women faced with their emigration from Fiji was leaving behind members of their nuclear and extended families. For instance, Asha, who emigrated independently at the age of 12, described suffering from years of separation anxiety from her mother and siblings. Similarly, Sheela was only six years old when she was separated from her favorite aunt, who had unfortunately passed away in Fiji before she even had the prospect of reuniting with her. Although these were challenging experiences for Asha and Sheela, they are both resilient and managed to overcome these incidents of separation and loss.

Nevertheless, although the issue of family separation and reunification is found amongst all refugee and immigrant groups, the fact that the women chose to speak about their experiences with reuniting and separating from family, underlines the importance of the topic amongst people who migrate. It points to the fact that migration affects people both psychologically and emotionally, and that even with time, the experiences of migration are not forgotten.

Social, Political, and Economic Mobility

Since migrating to California, the women have collectively experienced upward social, political and economic mobility. Socially, the women had been confined to the private domestic sphere in Fiji, where from a young age they were prepared to become obedient wives and mothers. Since migrating to California the women are no longer confined solely to the domestic sphere and they now must engage in the public sphere. With more freedoms in their movements, the women have acquired opportunities to alter

parts of their identities. For example, both Malti and Sheela were Hindus prior to migrating, had converted to different religions after migrating to California. Malti converted to Christianity after going to church with her in-laws and Sheela described converting to Catholicism after learning of the creed from her daughter's friend and through attending mass.

The women have also increased their political rights since migrating to California. Referring back to the historical context, the political future of Indo-Fijians generally and Indo-Fijian women specifically were considered bleak. As Indo-Fijians, their rights were limited and they were excluded from Fiji's political system. They could not own land and to this day still cannot. As a result, having political rights is important to the women and has led them to become naturalized citizens of the United States of America, which ensures that they are protected under the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. They also gain many rights and benefits through citizenship such as voting, sponsorship of family members to the U.S., eligibility for federal jobs and financial aid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). However, the most significant benefit of citizenship is that it offers the women a sense of belonging and the opportunity to permanently reside in California. Krishna, Malti, Priya, Asha, and Sheela have all chosen to reside in the United States of America permanently. With California as their new permanent home, the women have no plans of re-migrating to Fiji. Instead, visits, vacations and memories of their country of birth suffice for the women who have now transitioned into Indo-Fijian-Americans.

Finally, the women have increased their economic power since arriving in California. Krishna, Malti, and Priya were all housewives in Fiji but after migrating they joined the American labor force. This change in their gender role was necessary for adapting to their new lives in California and it allowed the women to begin earning independent incomes. These incomes have given the women the opportunity to purchase homes, send their children to college and technical schools, and have the luxury of travelling the world.

Maintaining the Indo-Fijian Identity and Not Just Immigrants but Transmigrants

None of the women plan to re-migrate to Fiji due to their increased social, political and economic power in the United States, but they stay connected to selected aspects of their Indo-Fijian identities. Jointly, it is important for the women to maintain aspects of the Indo-Fijian identity in California and to pass them onto their children and grandchildren. As fluent speakers of Fiji Hindi and an important marker of Indo-Fijian identity, “Fiji Baat” is passed down to their children and grandchildren. For example, Krishna’s children are fluent speakers of Fiji Hindi. Her daughter learned Hindi Fiji while living with Krishna’s parents and siblings, and Krishna’s son learned the language from his Indo-Fijian babysitter. Krishna explained that hiring an Indo-Fijian babysitter was a useful strategy because her son Johnny learned to speak Fiji Hindi fluently from her. Moreover, Malti and Priya are teaching their grandchildren Fiji Hindi, and Sheela’s daughter aspires to fluency in the language. Besides language, the art of Indo-Fijian cuisine is also preserved amongst the women and their families. Most of the women were taught to cook Indo-Fijian cuisine by their mothers during their childhood. These

same recipes are now being passed on to their children and grandchildren regardless of gender, which also suggests ways in which gender roles have been altered since migration.

All the women identified as Hindus prior to migrating, but religious affiliation was not strongly preserved. However, this does not mean that Hinduism is unimportant in the Indo-Fijian community in Modesto. Religion appears to be an important marker of the Indo-Fijian identity in Modesto and especially via the visibility of Indo-Fijian temples, ashrams, and religious organizations in the city. Furthermore, through participant-observations at the religious institutions, it is clear that both Indo-Fijian immigrant men and women are making efforts to preserve Hinduism in Modesto. Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand religious maintenance and conversion amongst members of the Indo-Fijian community.

The silhouettes also suggest that the women are best described as transmigrants and not just immigrants. Transmigrants are defined as:

Immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state. They are not sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities, and patterns of daily life in the country in which they reside. However, at the very same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence the local and national in the countries from which they emigrated. (Schiller, Basch, et al 1995)

Each woman engaged in varying degrees with both Fiji and India. Even Sheela, who migrated at the young age of six and has not been to Fiji since, still maintains ties to her country of birth. She housed relatives during Fiji's coups, continues to shop at Indo-

Fijian and Indian markets, and transmits aspects of her Indo-Fijian identity to her daughters. Also, technology such as satellite television, the Internet, and airplane flights makes it easy for the women to maintain transnational ties to both Fiji and India. For example, to familiarize her grandchildren with their Indian roots, Priya watches Zee TV with them. Asha's daughters use the Internet to listen and share Bollywood music with her. And finally, all the women (besides Sheela due to her phobia of flying) have made visits back to Fiji while Priya has visited India.

Women's Resiliency and Immigration as Success

The anthropological silhouettes demonstrate the resiliency of the Indo-Fijian immigrant women in this study. Each woman described facing adversities and challenges in both Fiji and in California and overcoming them. The sources of their resiliency were diverse. The women found strength in familial sources such as through relatives who sponsored them or the thought of their children suffering in Fiji. Others became resilient through spiritual sources while some found strength through their own personal characteristics. Overall, for these women, their migration can be interpreted as a success story. Through the women's stories we learn that they, along with their families, hoped that departing Fiji would help to resolve issues and conflicts that they hoped to overcome in the United States. For the majority of the women and their families, migration resolved their issues, and as Malti describes, allowed them to "move forward" with their lives. This is especially evident when set against the backdrop of the disturbing history of Indo-Fijians in Fiji, the experiences they encountered there, and the lives they once lived.

Their increased social, political and economic mobility since migrating and their desire to permanently reside in the United States are also symbols of their success.

Implications and Contributions of the Research

In my quest to give voice to Indo-Fijian women and to simultaneously learn about Indo-Fijian emigration to the United States, this study has several implications and hopefully contributes to our knowledge about this population. First, the anthropological silhouettes help to reveal needs of Indo-Fijian immigrant women in the city of Modesto. The needs identified also extend to their families, the Indo-Fijian immigrant community at large, and newly arriving immigrants. The first need identified is the need for emotional and psychological support services. Although the women are resilient and have overcome a variety of obstacles; emotional and psychological support services may help the women better cope with the stresses they once encountered in Fiji and the strains of migrating and transitioning to life in a new country. For instance, while in Fiji, Krishna experienced domestic violence not only from her father but also her mother-in-law. Depression and anxiety from these experiences as well as a crumbling marriage led to her to attempt to suicide. Although migrating allowed her to move on from such experiences and focus on rebuilding her life, Krishna admitted that I was the *first* person she ever spoke about her life to. She also mentioned that her experiences with her father in Fiji and in California ultimately severed their relationship. Also, while living in Fiji, Malti experienced some unnerving events during the 1987 coups, which had led her to live in fear and worry about the safety of her daughters. Also, as a 12-year-old adolescent girl, Asha's departure from Fiji without her mother and siblings was a traumatic

experience. And, after experiencing heavy turbulence on the airplane from Fiji to California, Sheela has developed a serious phobia of flying that she still carries with her today. Since the women described coping with the issues by themselves, and often in silence without much support, psychological and emotional support services may be beneficial to the women and could potentially aid in their mental health and wellness.

The study also helped to identify the need for vocational and professional services for Indo-Fijian immigrant women *and* men in California. The study revealed that most of the women and their families had difficulties finding employment. With no prior work experience in Fiji, combined with low levels of educational achievement, most of the women were limited to low-wage, unskilled employment in California. According to Berger (2004), making vocational and professional services available to immigrant women can help to empower them:

Training and employment are important parts of the healing process. Employment is powerful leverage for achieving and experiencing success because it allows women to interact with the social environment. The workplace is an important arena for assisting the process of establishing relationships within the wider community and offering opportunities to progress in acquiring the language and practicing it, leading to a sense of worth and power. Therefore, development of employment promotion programs that help women to develop work search, job keeping, gaining and retaining employment, and vocational/professional skills are necessary components of services for immigrant women. (2004:214)

Thus, vocational and professional services can assist Indo-Fijian immigrant women achieve greater employment success. For example, Sheela tried to advance from housekeeping. Although she had found a secretarial job and was on her way to better pay, she was “let go” due to her lack of computer skills. Even though Sheela describes housekeeping as “easy” work, she expressed that she would never want her daughters to

be housekeepers. She aspires for them to become professionals. Also, we learn through the women that men in the community also face challenges with employment. For instance, Priya described that her husband was an accountant in Fiji. Although he had the necessary skills for accounting in the United States, he was required to retrain. But, as a newly arrived immigrant with a wife and two children, Priya's husband had no choice but to find immediate work to support his family. He took a job as a kitchen helper at a hospital. Furthermore, Priya had mentioned that her husband was intimidated by American education and schooling. Nonetheless, professional and vocational services may be especially useful and empowering for recent arrivals who may lack qualifications, or for those who might need retraining and additional education.

Finally, there is a need for community programs for Indo-Fijian immigrant women. Berger (2004) states that community programs should focus on:

Education about legal rights, especially, but not exclusively, for those who come from totalitarian and oppressive societies, in which speaking out was dangerous and could have led to vindictive disciplinary actions, and for those who come from traditional societies that oppress women.
(2004:228)

Coming from Fiji where the women and their ancestors have been oppressed and marginalized because of their ethnicity as well as their gender, points to the need for community programs, where the women can be educated about their political, economic and social rights in California and in the United States. Furthermore, the community programs should also offer ways in which the community can preserve their unique cultural heritage. Classes on Fiji Hindi, the history of Indo-Fijians, and Indo-Fijian cuisine can be especially beneficial to the community who is seeking to preserve and

maintain aspects of their Indo-Fijian identity. Although the Indo-Fijian community in Modesto may provide these services informally, they are not easy to identify.

Finally and generally speaking, this study makes a contribution because the women's stories help to put human faces to U.S. immigration. Since immigration is one of the most pressing contemporary social issues in the United States, the ways in which immigrants are depicted, especially in the mainstream, becomes extremely salient. Many misconceptions regarding these immigrants exist in the United States. Sociologist Pierette Hondageneu-Sotelo (1994) describes these misconceptions in her book *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*:

First, immigrants were blamed for stealing jobs of U.S. citizens and depressing wage levels . . . Second immigrants were accused of draining the U.S. economy through their consumption of social services. The accusations included claims that immigrants come to the United States to obtain welfare payments, that they do not pay taxes, and that their children and families constitute a growing underclass, as they drain medical and educational resources in the United States. Finally . . . new immigrants from Asia and Latin America were [perceived] after all "too different," that they were ultimately inassimilable. (1994:xv)

These misconceptions continue to persist as immigrants are rarely given opportunities to defend themselves or voice their experiences and perceptions. By studying the lives of immigrants, listening to their voices and reflecting on the history from which they come from, many of the misconceptions can be debunked. For instance, the history provided in this study, accompanied with the anthropological silhouettes, help to do just this. We learn that the women came to the United States to not steal jobs, but instead to perform jobs that most Americans refuse to do. We learn through exploring their lives that they contribute to the American economy through their participation in the labor force as well

as through buying homes and sending their children to universities and technical schools in the nation. Moreover, we learn that they are *not* “very different” from the native population after all. They too, like their “native” counterparts, have the same hopes and dreams of increasing the quality of their lives and their families’ lives.

Finally, although the Indo-Fijian immigrant women’s experiences and perspectives are not unique and are widespread amongst all immigrants, their stories are merely a reflections, or in this case silhouettes, of the phenomenon of migration. These reflections call attention to widespread immigrant needs, which is extremely significant in a nation where the foreign born population has hit a record-high of 42.5 million as of July 2014 (Camarota and Zeigler 2015:1).

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Appendix A: Interview Consent Form

Consent Form

Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Ambrita Nand

Title of Study: Mothers and Daughters of the Indo-Fijian-American Diaspora: First-Generation and Second-Generation Indo-Fijian Women Residing in California's Central Valley

1. You have been asked to participate in a research study, which seeks to investigate the lives of women belonging to the Indo-Fijian American diaspora residing in Modesto, CA. This research on the Indo-Fijian women residing in Modesto is being conducted towards the completion of a master's degree in applied anthropology at San Jose State University. The research will be used in a thesis that will be submitted for review by the Department of Anthropology. There is also a possibility that research may also be presented at academic conferences or published within academia. The goal of this research is to understand the gendered experiences of first-generation and second-generation Indo-Fijians women. This research will be used to gain a better understanding on how identity and cultures are transformed and reinvented in a new time and space.
2. You will be asked participate in various discussions concerning the migration experience, ways of preserving traditional Indo-Fijian culture, Indo-Fijian history, how the different generations differ, and the changing roles of women in this community. Interviews with specific Indo-Fijian informants will be used in collecting information. These interviews will be vital in understanding women's experiences with migration as well as to understand the experiences of second-generation women living in Modesto, CA. The interviews will take approximately sixty minutes but participants are free to lengthen or shorten their interviews due to comfort. If you agree with participating in the interviews, you will be asked to have the conversations audio recorded. This will be beneficial so that information is not distorted. However, you may refuse to be audio recorded, and in its place, written notes shall be taken. Furthermore, the informants can ask the researcher for personal information to be excluded from the research such as: their names, workplaces, etc.
3. There is little or no risk in participating in this research project beyond that of discussing and reflecting upon your own personal experiences. Potential risks may involve a loss of privacy or exposure. Interview material such as the audio recordings, notes, and transcripts will be securely stored in locked filing cabinets. No one besides the researcher will have access to these materials. All personal information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Agencies with research oversight, such as the SJSU Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board, have the authority to review research records.
4. No direct benefits are expected from the research. However, indirect benefits include the general feeling of reward for participating in research where no serious research has been conducted.
5. As mentioned earlier, research may also be presented at academic conferences or published within academia. Participants will be identified in the projects by their real names.
6. Research may also be presented at academic conferences or published within academia. Participants will be identified in the projects by their real names due to the nature of the research. The reason for this is that the community is small and people know each other, thus maintaining confidentiality may not be possible.

7. There is no compensation for participation in this study.
8. If you have any questions regarding the research, please contact the researcher, Ambrita Nand at (831) 431-9339, or by e-mail, ambritak@gmail.com. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Anthropology Department Chair Chuck Darrah. He can be reached at (408)924-5314, or by e-mail Chuck.Darrah@sjsu.edu. Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924- 2427.
9. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you chose not to participate in the study.
10. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study, which consists of interviews and follow-up interviews. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University.
11. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- * The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.
- * The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

I have read the following information provided above and agree to participate in this research.

____ Agree to audio recordings for the interview

PARTICIPANT

Print name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

INVESTIGATOR

Print name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Sample Questions

Interview Protocol

Welcome and thank you for your participation today in this interview. My name is Ambrita Nand and I am a graduate student at San Jose State University. I am conducting my study in partial fulfillment for the Masters of Applied Anthropology. This interview will take about 60 minutes and will include a series of questions regarding your experiences with being a first-generation Indo-Fijian woman residing in California's Central Valley, specifically in Modesto. I would like your permission to tape-record this interview so that I may accurately document our conversation. If at anytime you would like to discontinue the use of the tape-recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know, as it is important that you feel comfortable. Your responses are important to this study and they will be used to gain a better understanding of how immigration affects the first-generation as well as the second-generation.

At this time I would like to take the time to remind you of your (written or oral) consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in this research.

Read only if written consent is given:

You and I have both signed and dated each copy, verifying that we agree to do this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other copy, which will be securely stored and locked away.

Also, your participation in this interview today is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, once again, please feel free let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without any consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin the interview?

(Answer all necessary questions or concerns)

Now, with your permission, we will begin the interview.

LIST OF SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for First-Generation Participants

Interview will take approximately 60 minutes. These are open-ended questions. Additional questions may be asked to help answer the research questions.

1. What is your name and age? In what town or city were you born? What country? How old were you when you first arrived to the United States? What year was that? When did you first arrive in Modesto? What year was that?
2. Describe your homeland. What language did/do you speak there? How did your community differ from where you live today? What foods did you eat? Did people dress different there than they do in the United States? Where people religious where you came from? Are you religious? What types of traditions did you have in your homeland? What kind of job did you

have there? What do you miss about your homeland? Generally, what was your life like there? What was going on historically? Can you tell me about the government in your native country?

3. Why did you and your family and/or your family leave your native country? Describe your trip to the United States. What obstacles did you have to overcome? What experiences did you have? Any memorable experience(s)?

4. Before you came, what did you think life in the United States would be like? What had you heard about the United States? How you think you life would be different in the United States as compared to it in your homeland? Had you seen pictures of the U.S. before you came? What did you think of them? What had people told you about the United States? What did you hear about women in the United States?

5. Once you arrived in the United States, what did you experience? Was it different from what you expected? Explain. What stereotypes/expectations did you have? Did you experience any “culture shock”? What possessions did you bring with you? What important things, if anything, did you leave behind? What specific cultural traditions did you bring with you?

6. What kind of challenges did you experience adjusting to life and culture in the United States? Know or did you have to learn English? Did you change your eating habits? Did you change the way you dress? Did you change the way you related to your friends and family? Did or do you miss family members/friends? Did you change the way you learn? Did you change your leisure activities? Has life improved since immigration?

7. What differences have you noticed in regard to: living circumstances (housing, food, transportation, etc.), education, jobs, gender roles (what is expected of men or women), social customs and culture, values and attitudes? What are some customs that you have felt comfortable keeping? Have you dropped any customs because you felt some pressure to do so?

8. Do you have a green card? How did you obtain it? Are you an official U.S. citizen? When did you become an official citizen? How did you end up in Modesto, CA? Did you live anywhere else before Modesto, CA? Did you know anyone when you arrived in the United States? In Modesto?

9. What kind of job(s) did you have when you came to the United States? How did you find it? What was your experience? What do you do know for a living? Do you think it is easy for you as an Indo-Fijian woman to find work?

10. Did you go to school in the United States? What was your school experience like? Did you find school or English challenging? What challenges has learning English created for you? Do your parents speak English? If not, has this created any communication problems? What language do your children speak? Do you think you will ever forget your native language? How does that make you feel?

11. Have you faced discrimination in the United States based on your women, race, religion, or culture? If, have ever had a similar problem in your homeland? How did the experience(s) in this country make you feel? What did you do to overcome prejudice? What advice would you give to new immigrants from your country about this problem?
12. What do you believe it mean to “be an American”? Do you feel mostly American now or something else? What you believe in means to be Indo-Fijian? What do you know about Indo-Fijian history? What do you think life would be like for you if you did not migrate?
13. Are you married? When and where did you get married? Is your spouse Indo-Fijian? If not, what does your spouse know about your native homeland and culture? If you are single do you have plans for finding an Indo-Fijian mate?
14. If you have children where they born in this country? Do they speak your native language? Do they know about your immigration experience/native culture? How might your children’s life differ if you did not emigrate? What traditions and values have you passed to them?
15. Do you ever visit Fiji? Do you have plans of returning someday?
16. Is there anything that I haven’t asked you or that you would like to talk about that was not addressed in the interview?
17. Would it be okay to contact you if I have any additional follow-up questions?

Interview will take approximately 60 minutes. These are open-ended questions. Additional questions may be asked to help answer the research questions.

1. What is your name and age? When were you born and in what town? Describe your childhood? Describe your parents and your brothers and sisters if you have any? Do you know any stories about how your family first came to the United States? Where did they first settle? Why? How did they make a living? Did your family stay in one place or move around? How did they come to live in this area? What stories have come down to you about your parents and grandparents? More distant ancestors?
2. What year did you move to Modesto, CA? How long have you been living here? Where are other places that you have lived?
3. What languages do you speak? Which language did you speak at home with your parents? Where did you go to school? Describe your school experience(s) in elementary, junior high, high school, and college if any. Did you parents help you with school homework? Did you enjoy school? Was it difficult or easy? What did you want to be when you were a child?
4. What kinds of food did you eat growing up? What kinds of foods do you eat now? What about leisure and activities? Did you watch Bollywood films? Do you still?

5. Are you religious? What types of cultural traditions did you grow up with? What types of cultural traditions do you practice now? Did you go to any events related to your parent's native culture? Do you hang out with other Indo-Fijians? If yes, when and where? Do you wear traditional clothes? Do you use traditional items and cook traditional foods for them?

6. What was your first job? What other jobs have you held? What jobs did you like the best and which one's did you like the least? What were your experiences like?

7. Have you faced discrimination in the United States based on your women, race, religion, or culture? How did the experience(s) make you feel? What did you do to overcome prejudice? What advice would you give to others about this problem?

8. What do you believe it mean to "be an American"? Do you feel "Americanized"? Do you feel mostly American now or something else? What you believe in means to be Indo-Fijian and Indo-Fijian American?

9. Are you married? When and where did you get married? Is your spouse Indo-Fijian? If not, what does your spouse know about your native homeland and culture? If you are single do you have plans for finding an Indo-Fijian mate?

10. If you have children where were they born? Do they speak your native language? Do they know about your immigration experience/native culture? How might your children's life differ if you did not emigrate? What traditions and values have you passed to them? Do you stay home with your kids or watch your own kids when you are at work?

11. Do you ever visit Fiji? Do you have family there? Where else do you have family? Do you have plans of visiting or living there someday?

12. Is there anything that I haven't asked you or that you would like to talk about that was not addressed in the interview?

13. Would it be okay to contact you if I have any additional follow-up questions?