

# **Experiences in Managing, Challenging and Identifying with New Zealand Indian Ethnic Identities**

Malti Vallabh

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Primary Supervisor: Associate Professor Evan Poata-Smith

Secondary Supervisor: Professor Edwina Pio

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Malti Vallabh

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## **Abstract**

Statistics from the 2006 Census suggest that although a significant number of Indians are born in New Zealand, they still identify strongly with their ancestral country of origin. Yet the specific nature of how New Zealand born and raised Indians perform and practice their ethnicity is fluid, dynamic and malleable. This study aims to explore the conceptions of contemporary Indian identities in New Zealand using a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews are conducted on a sample of New Zealand born Gujarati Indians to explore the personal views of participants, their experiences of life in New Zealand, travels to India and their own accounts of Indian-ness and the way that those identities are negotiated and renegotiated on a daily basis. Using a combination of snowball sampling and purposive sampling, interview data from both male and female participants from the North Island region of New Zealand between the ages of 18-30 years is used. The findings from the thematic analysis of the data indicate the sometimes problematic and conflicting ways in which identifying boundaries for contemporary Indian identities are shaped and reshaped within different contexts and/or interactions. Findings also demonstrate that characteristics of “being Indian” for this group of participants are largely shaped and influenced by their families, food, religion and upbringing.

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.0 Introduction/Background:**

At the 2006 Census, 354,552 New Zealanders were categorised as belonging to the “Asian” ethnic group. This represented New Zealand’s fourth largest major ethnic category after “European”, “Maori” and “Other Ethnicity” categories. Of this “Asian” group 104,583 people identified as Indian (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). This represented an increase of 68.2% in the five year period since the 2001 Census which recorded 62,190 Indians living in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 2006). Of those reporting Indian ethnicity, 23%, almost one in four were born in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). These statistics suggest that although a significant number of Indians are born in New Zealand, they still identify with their ancestral country of origin. Yet the specific nature of how New Zealand born and raised Indians actually perform and practice their ethnicity is fluid, dynamic and malleable. Furthermore, as a diasporic trans-national community, their identity is negotiated and re-negotiated in different social contexts and across national borders. The researcher’s motivation in further exploring the ways in which ethnicity is managed and negotiated by the New Zealand born population came from being present at a cricket game between New Zealand and India in Auckland, where she was a witness to a huge Indian fan base and support for the Indian team by New Zealand born Indians. These supporters were dressed in colours representing the Indian

flag and Indian cricket team's uniform, had painted faces, were playing traditional Indian musical instruments, singing chants and using Indian slang.

Three months later, when the author was developing a thesis topic, this proud display of 'Indian-ness' was not so visible. Although traditional Indian practices such as dress and eating practices are very rarely displayed outside of the home or specific contact zones (such as weddings, temples or sports events), how is it that a New Zealand born population still strongly identifies with their ethnic ancestral roots? How is authenticity of an Indian identity defined and represented by a New Zealand born Indian population? What ethnic boundaries are set and reset by this New Zealand born Indian population living in New Zealand and when or are these boundaries and identification markers rejected to separate them from other Indians living in New Zealand or India?

### **1.1 Purpose of the study:**

It is important to note that 'New Zealand Indian' is a much more complex category than it was thirty years ago. It now includes different regional, linguistic and religious groups, as well as different generations, and represents different experiences of migration (Indians from Fiji, South Africa, East Africa, Middle East, North America and so on). However, the specific purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of New Zealand born Indians in managing, accepting, rejecting and negotiating their identity in their everyday lives. The study was undertaken to identify complex and sometimes problematic ways in which a New Zealand Indian identity is

managed and sometimes mismanaged among participants, and the ways in which the identifying boundaries are shaped and reshaped for this particular group living in New Zealand.

## **1.2 Research Methodology:**

In order to answer the questions stated above a qualitative research design was employed. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore the lived experiences of a sample of 16 New Zealand born Indians living in the North Island region of New Zealand. These regions included Auckland, Rotorua, Wellington and Pukekohe. A sociological analysis of the participants' shared lived experiences was used to examine how notions of ethnicity are constructed and reconstructed by participants of this study to shape and reshape their definitions of ethnic boundaries.

## **1.3 Definition of Terms:**

Some important terms for this study are defined:

**New Zealand Indian** – used interchangeably with New Zealand born Indians to describe those who were born in New Zealand, whose parents are of Indian descent. This particular thesis focuses on the experiences of New Zealand born Indians whose identity has been negotiated primarily in the New Zealand context.

**Second generation Indian** – used to refer to New Zealand Indian participants whose parents had migrated to New Zealand from India. It was established during interviews that some participants who self-identified as second generation Indian had either one or two parents who were born in India but migrated to New Zealand. Because they self-identified as being second generation, they are also used in this category of being ‘second generation Indian’.

**Gujarati** –used to describe participants whose ancestral roots or ties link to the state of Gujarat in Western India. In this study, all participants’ parents or grandparents were born in the state of Gujarat; therefore they also self-identified as being Gujarati.

**Gujarati language** – also used to describe the language spoken in Gujarat and by Gujarati descendants and participants. The language has similarities to Sanskrit.

**Gama** – in Gujarati means village. It is the term used by participants to describe where their home or their parents and grandparents home is in India.

**Gora** – the Gujarati term used by participants to refer to those of Pakeha or European descent. Gora is used for males and Gori for females.

## **1.4 Summary of Chapters:**

**Chapter 1 (Introduction)** provides a background of New Zealand Indians living in New Zealand based on data from the 2006 Census. This section also describes the nature of this study and key terms used.

**Chapter 2 (Literature Review)** offers a brief explanation on the concept of ethnicity from a sociological perspective and provides an overview of Indians migrating to New Zealand. The chapter also reviews previous literature about studies on Indian identities and diasporas, both internationally and in New Zealand.

**Chapter 3 (Methodology)** describes the data collection method for this study including recruitment of participants, interview procedure, and how data was analysed.

**Chapter 4 (Findings)** presents a thematic layout of the qualitative data using themes and subthemes, with a brief description and participant's quotes to further illustrate the emergent themes from the data.

**Chapter 5 (Discussion)** includes a summary and discussion of the findings from this study comparing and contrasting them with previous literature in this area of Indian identity.

**Chapter 6 (Conclusion)** provides a summary of the study as a whole, including overall findings, an overview of the study's limitations and recommendations for further explorations.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction:**

The aim of this study is to explore conceptions of contemporary Indian identities in New Zealand. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents a brief background on the concept of identity and ethnicity from a sociological perspective. Section two of this chapter presents a historical overview of Indians living in New Zealand, briefly discussing immigration patterns and experiences of immigration policies, and census data of the New Zealand Indian population living in New Zealand. The final section of this chapter presents an overview of the research literature on contemporary Indian identities and diaspora studies, both in New Zealand and internationally. It will examine the way identities have been shaped through settings, such as sport and festivals, gender studies and literature on the complexities of a shared ethnic and national identity and the negotiating process which occurs in shaping one's sense of belonging.

### **2.1 Identity, 'Race' and Ethnicity**

#### **2.1.1. Sociological concept of 'identity'**

Most sociological conceptions of identity make the assumption that there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society (Stryker, 1980). It is

suggested that 'identity' as a construct cannot exist without social groups (Gans, 1979), social relationships, structures and social interactions of which we are inevitably a part of and participate in (Brewer, 2001). Often, one's perception of identity is mistakenly seen as being relatively fixed or unchanging. However, sociologists are increasingly challenging assumptions of a single coherent self by treating the concept of identity as a relational and contextual construct (Brekhus, 2008). Identity is viewed as an ongoing process that is constantly evolving and changing over time through different interactions, both with others and within and between societies (Charon, 2010). Comparing behaviours and attitudes over time, and looking at one's personal biography and histories within different social structures, allows us to see how identities are developed, changed, created or managed. It also allows one to see and identify the multiplicity of identities one holds.

It is important to make the distinction between notions of 'personal identity' and 'social identity' (Burke, 2004). 'Personal identity' can be explained in relation to social processes during socialisation (McLennan, Ryan & Spoonley, 2004). It is composed of the characteristics a person attributes to themselves and asserts during interaction with others (Snow & Anderson, 1987). 'Social identity' is how one uses or represents those attributes to mediate between social structures or society's expectation of individual behaviour (Coupland, 2007; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Symbolic interactionist approaches suggest that it is through the process of socialisation and interaction with others that one learns expected ways of behaving. In turn, social interactions are the context within which identities are created, recognised, negotiated and sometimes lost (Charon, 2010). Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) suggest our perception of self and identity derive from real or imagined perceptions of how others see and expect us to be. Such notions on identity and formation can be seen as problematic through misinterpreting expected perceptions others have of us or expected ways of behaving.

In contrast, Erving Goffman's notion of 'dramaturgy' suggests a preconceived notion of self-concept and identity, where actors attempt to manage the impression others have of them through performance (Goffman, 1950). This notion of performance is further supported by Butler (1998) in her study on gender and sexuality, where her findings suggest the management and impressions of gender identity are influenced by social sanctions. From this perspective, identity and conceptions of the self can be problematic through mismanaging the impressions we give of our 'self' or the way in which we want others to see us, compared with socially accepted ways of behaving. Both approaches demonstrate the negotiation process of interaction with others in shaping notions of 'self' and identity.

### **2.1.2. 'Race' and Ethnicity**

As argued by Miles and Small (1999), most sociologists agree that clear distinctions should be made between the terms 'race' and ethnicity. The concept of 'race' assumes a belief in the existence of naturally occurring groups categorised by real or imagined biologically and physically determined characteristics (Miles & Small, 1999; Furze, Savy, Brym & Lie, 2008; McLennan, Ryan & Spoonley, 2004). This categorising of people whose physical markers are deemed socially significant (Furze, Savy, Brym & Lie, 2008) is imposed on individuals or groups of individuals. Whereas Miles and Small (1999) suggest biological characteristics determining 'race' are regarded as fixed, others suggest that 'race' is a social concept, one in which certain physical characteristics take on social meanings that become the basis for racism and discrimination. Thus 'race' is said to vary in meaning across cultures, within societies and at different times in history for particular societies.

Zelinsky and Lee (1998) have suggested that transnational or diasporic communities that cross and re-cross international communities are "...capable of retraining or reinventing much of the ancestral culture, while devising original amalgams of their cultural heritage with what they find awaiting them in their new, perhaps provisional abodes" (Zelinsky & Lee, 1998, p. 294). This highlights the fact that ethnicity is fundamentally a relational concept rather than a set of specific cultural properties. The concept of ethnicity, therefore, refers to the way that groups and individuals

differentiate themselves from others in the course of their everyday lives. Compared with notions of 'race' having naturally occurring and pre-determined biological characteristics (Miles & Small, 1999; Furze, Savy, Brym & Lie, 2008; McLennan, Ryan & Spoonley, 2004; Karner, 2007), Fredrik Barth (1969) argued that ethnicity is an ongoing process of social organisation where group boundaries are created and reproduced within a particular community. Although members of these groups claim an historical existence based on social and cultural attributes, these boundaries are not pre-existing or naturally occurring but rather continuing processes that are fluid and socially constructed. As Fenton (1999) has suggested, "...we should understand ethnicity as a social process, as moving boundaries and identities which people, collectively and individually, draw around themselves in their social lives" (Fenton, 1999, p. 10). Furthermore, as suggested by Barth (1969), despite changes in cultural characteristics and organisation within it, maintaining a boundary is all that is required for ethnic groups' continuity. He further emphasised that the study of ethnicity should place more emphasis on the ethnic boundaries defining the group as opposed to the specific cultural properties it encloses.

Nagel (1994) has suggested ethnicity to be fluid and constantly created, recreated and often transformed in modern societies through social interactions within and outside of ethnic communities. She argues, therefore, that ethnicity is best understood as a "dynamic constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organisation" (p. 152). Proposing identity and culture to be the basic building blocks of ethnicity, Nagel (1994),

similar to Barth (1969), further suggests that identity and culture should not be viewed as prior, fixed aspects of ethnic organisation but as problematic, constantly changing and negotiated features of ethnicity. This is further illustrated by Fenton (2003) who acknowledges that individuals "...may have an ascribed identity which is embedded in their personality and life experiences, yet still perceive circumstances under which it may be instrumental to deploy it..." (p.84). Geertz (1973) has suggested that discussions of ethnicity should acknowledge that membership or identification in an ethnic group is often experienced as an ascribed identity. Therefore, not only is ethnicity embraced by individual actors of particular groups, but, similar to the concept of 'race', ethnicity is also ascribed to members and individuals, particularly from birth. Furthermore, as acknowledged by Nagel (1994), ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic and political processes, as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions. An example of this can be found in ethnic categories presented in the national census forms.

Statistics New Zealand's use of the term 'ethnicity' is based on the work of Smith (1986), where ethnicity is defined the ethnic group or groups people identify with or feel they belong to. It is acknowledged that ethnicity is a measure of one's cultural affiliation where one may or may not identify with more than one ethnic group (Statistics New Zealand, 2013).

## 2.2 Historical Overview

There are a number of historical reasons why Indians have migrated to New Zealand. These include a number of “push” and “pull” factors from the growing economic, political and societal pressures present as a result of the impact of British imperialism and the growing cash economy in India (Leckie, 2007; Kapil, 1980; Bandyopadhyay, 2007). Such factors as overpopulation, underemployment and the decline of village industries such as cotton and textile manufacturing, combined with a rising standard of living which led to increased poverty, are cited as reasons for migrating (Tiwari, 1980; Leckie, 2007; Bandyopadhyay, 2007).

The first Indian settlers arrived in New Zealand during the early 1800s. The first recorded Indian in New Zealand was said to be a Bengali sailor who jumped ship off the coast of the South Island in 1809 and lived with local Maori (Bandyopadhyay, 2007). Although they constituted only a small number during the 1890's (approximately 45 Indian men and one woman were recorded in 1896 as being resident in New Zealand), most of these migrants are said to have come from the states of Gujarat and Punjab in India (Kapil, 1980; Leckie, 2007).

The 1921 census recorded 671 Indians living in New Zealand. However the flow of migrants from the Asian continent had slowed, due to the racist Immigration Amendment Act of 1921 which restricted the access of migrants

from India and China into New Zealand (Leckie, 1995). Although immigration was restrictive, those who did arrive after 1921 were the wives, fiancées and children of migrants and settlers who were already living here (Friesen, 2008; Pio, 2008).

Initially, upon arrival, many Indians had intended on purchasing farm land but found it to be too expensive and were forced into labouring jobs such as road-building and brick-laying (Leckie, 2007). Those who had settled in the more urban areas of New Zealand found employment as hawkers of fruit and vegetables (Kapil, 1980; Bandyopadhyay, 2007; Leckie, 2007). Some also managed to get labouring work in the Otahuhu and Pukekohe market gardens (Leckie, 2007; Kapil 1980). Those who were involved in fruit and vegetable retail soon started to establish their own small scale shops in central Auckland and Wellington. Indeed, this occupational niche was to form the basis of many stereotypical images of Indian families held by other New Zealanders. As Bandyopadhyay (2007) states, “by 1921, about one third of the Indian male population was classified as self-employed; at the time of the time of the 1991 census, 23.5% of the Indo-New Zealanders were still employed in retail trade. And thus was born the well-known stereotype of the ‘Indian dairy-owner’...” (Bandyopadhyay, 2007, p. 127).

Despite their small numbers, there were increasing fears being expressed by some New Zealanders about the numbers of Indian and Chinese migrants arriving in New Zealand (Pio, 2008). During the 1920s this became a matter

of public and political debate. The White New Zealand League was established with an objective of attempting to keep New Zealand a 'white man's' country (Kapil, 1980). Indians in Pukekohe, having been involved in the agricultural industries, endured racism and discrimination where local New Zealand landowners refused to lease their land to Indians and Indians were not allowed to join the 'Local Growers Association' (Kapil, 1980; Bandyopadhyay, 2007; Leckie, 2007). The experience of racism and discrimination in Pukekohe led to the formation of the New Zealand Indian Central Association, which was comprised of a unity between three regional associations already established: Auckland, Wellington and Taumaruni (Kapil, 1980; Bandyopadhyay, 2007; Leckie, 2007; Pio, 2008). Together they petitioned successive New Zealand governments demanding that all Indians, as British citizens, should be entitled to the same rights as other New Zealanders (Kapil, 1980, Leckie, 2007). Although Leckie (2007) points out, it is unclear if the petition was ever tabled before the New Zealand Parliament and, in any case, the White New Zealand League had ceased to operate as a group by 1938.

Another reason for the establishment of the New Zealand Central Association and its regional branches across New Zealand (Tiwari, 1980) was to preserve Indian identity, unity and advancement among various Indians living in New Zealand, regardless of caste, religion and regional background (Leckie, 2007; Pio, 2008). The establishment of the different associations across New Zealand also provided space and opportunity for members to share and participate in facilities, not only for cultural and

religious practices or celebrations, but also education, by establishing various traditional dance, Gita (religious scripture) and language classes (Tiwari, 1980; Leckie,2007).

The Indian Association also set out to ensure the common welfare of Indians in New Zealand (Leckie, 2007; Tiwari, 1980; Pio, 2008). This included addressing issues of discrimination against Indians, providing support for newer migrants, and reuniting families of those already living in New Zealand (Leckie, 2007).

After World War Two, immigration policies gradually changed to permit the special entry of Indians as students and to reunify families (Friesen, 2008). Those arriving in New Zealand tended to settle in concentrated clusters with other Indians as opposed to dispersing themselves around the country. Gujarati Indians, for example, were concentrated in areas such as Auckland, Pukekohe and Wellington (Kapil, 1980).

During the 1986 census there were only 14,172 people (0.4% of the entire New Zealand population) who identified as an Indian, and of this group, a large number are reported to have been of Gujarati descent (Friesen, 2008), compared with 104,583 in the 2006 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) living in New Zealand.

## 2.3 Indian Identity and Diaspora Studies

Research which examines identity in the Indian diasporic context looks at the way in which those identities can be shaped or constructed through performance in festivals such as Diwali (Johnson, 2007), and through cricket as a quintessentially “Indian” sport (Madan, 2000; Bhattacharya, 2006). These studies suggest that such “contact zones” (Johnson, 2007) provide a space or situational context in which diasporic groups can display and perform aspects of identity and cultural practices. Contact zones, as described by Pratt (1991), are “...social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other” (p. 33). Identity displays within these zones lie at the centre of such performances (Johnson, 1997). However, Alexander (1996), Eade (1997) and Gillespie (1995) stress the importance of looking more closely at experiences of hybridity for individuals within their daily lives as opposed to specific ‘contact zones’ which allow for display and performance of cultural practices (as cited in Dwyer, 2000, p. 475). Furthermore, hybridity, as suggested by Hall (1990) consists of a process of learning to confront pressures to conform to ethnic norms and values of the country of origin and the dominant representations of the norm and values of their adopted country. Hybrid identities for diasporic Indian groups include a mix of Indian identity and cultural practices and the national identity of the country in which they are located.

Studies on identity formation of Indian-Americans (also referred to as Desi-American) look at youth culture in the context of the second generation club

scene (Maira, 1999; Maira, 2002; Murthy, 2007), where traditional folk music is remixed over Western dance club rhythms including house, techno and hip-hop (Diethrich, 1999/2000; Maira, 1999; Durham 2004; Murthy, 2007). These studies identify a negotiation process between what Maira (2002) terms 'cultural nostalgia' and 'coolness' during identity formation processes experienced by second generation Indian-American youths (Maira, 2002; Diethrich, 1999/2000; Maira, 1999). The studies suggest a negotiation process occurs between identifying with dominant groups, for example, Blacks in America, and the American white population (Maira, 2002).

Other research on identity identifies the conflicts that arise as a result of pressures to conform to the cultural values and expectations of the family that one is brought up in on the one hand, while also conforming to the expectations and behaviours of the dominant or majority culture of the country in which they live, on the other hand. Identities are often seen to be in conflict between ethnic identity (the national identity of one's homeland) and national identity (the identifying label of their country of citizenship). Such studies look at negotiating identities of diasporic groups or immigrant groups, with gender roles as a basis for analysis (Barker, 1997; Durham, 2004).

A lot of literature available on Indians in New Zealand discusses the experiences of immigration and the settlement of Indians in New Zealand under different policy regimes (Kapil, 1980; Bandyopadhyay, 2007; Leckie, 2007; Pio, 2008). Given that for a long period of time it was male settlers

who dominated the Indian presence in New Zealand, there are many histories of Indian migration that document the experiences of those men (Leckie, 2006). Although some books do detail women's arrival (for example Leckie, 2007; Pio, 2008), accounts of Indian women's experiences in New Zealand are few and far between. More recent studies on Indian experiences in New Zealand, however, have attempted to redress this by exploring women's experiences of cultural integration and/or paid employment (for example, Pio 2005; Pio, 2007; Pio, 2008; Nayar, 2009; Nayar, Hocking & Giddings, 2012). Furthermore, this increased focus on the experiences of Indian women reflects significant changes in the employment patterns of women more generally in New Zealand society and the corresponding changes in gender roles. Whereas historical accounts often suggested Indian women would work in those businesses or retail shops established by their husbands prior to arrival to New Zealand (Leckie, 2007; Tiwari, 1980), a newer, possibly more assimilated generation of women have now entered the workforce in a wider range of occupational roles and entrepreneurship (Pio, 2005; Pio, 2008; Pio & Essers, 2013).

Scholars also discuss the impact that the arrival of women in New Zealand had on the revival of Indian cultural practices in the New Zealand context (Leckie, 2007; Leckie, 2006; Pio, 2008; Nayar, 2009). Such practices included the non-consumption of certain meats, such as beef. Upon arrival to New Zealand, many migrant women found their husbands had given up religious practices such as the non-consumption of beef (Leckie, 2007). Furthermore, in her discussion of women migrant's experiences, Leckie

(2006) suggests an adaptation process was also experienced in reinventing ways to sustain Indian diets such as vegetarianism and certain Indian dishes. With limited access to vegetables and herbs commonly used in Indian dishes, many women established gardens in their homes to grow vegetable, such as eggplant, and herbs, such as chillies, garlic and coriander which they would dry and grind for future use (Leckie, 2006). This process of recreating and reinventing helped establish informal networks with other Indian women migrants by sharing methods or reproducing and restoring religious, cultural and eating practices, which in turn allowed them a space and network to share experiences in New Zealand (Leckie, 2006; Leckie, 2007).

While there have been studies of Indian migrants with a focus on work and gender (for example Pio, 2005; Pio, 2007; Pio, 2008; Nayar, 2009; Nayar, Hocking & Giddings, 2012), and the history of migration policies for Indians to New Zealand (Palat, 1996; Leckie, 1995; Vanmali, 1982; Leckie, 1981; Kapil 1980), few studies, as noted by Bandyopadhyay, (2007) have been conducted in the New Zealand context that examine Indian identity of a New Zealand born generation. Most research which specifically looks at New Zealand born Indian identities comes from various Masters theses from various universities.

A number of studies that have examined New Zealand Indian identities have looked at the population of Gujarati Indians in Wellington (Gilbertson, 2007; Gilbertson, 2010; Williams, 2010) and Christchurch (Fuchs, Linkenbach &

Malik, 2010). These studies suggest that perceptions of 'how to be Indian' indicate that a negotiation process occurs between two identity categories ('Kiwi' and Indian). This process involves New Zealand Indians negotiating boundaries between their Indian-ness and "Kiwi-ness". This is achieved by accepting or rejecting certain aspects of culture (Williams, 2010) as a means to achieve what Gilbertson (2007; 2010) terms 'the best of both worlds'. Indian culture, as defined by Williams (2010) refers to language, religion, rituals, food, dance, customs, values and traditions that are specifically and uniquely Indian. Aspects of Williams (2010) definition of 'Indian culture' are reflective of sociological conceptions of culture as being the complex system of meaning and behaviour (Anderson & Taylor, 2013) which includes practices, languages, symbols, beliefs and values created by groups to deal with real life problems (Furze, Savy, Brym and Lie, 2008).

Results from Gilbertson's (2007; 2010) study also suggest that authenticity of an Indian identity was heavily monitored and constructed not only within the Gujarati community and families, but also outside of the community with non-Indians' assumptions of an 'authentic' Indian behaviour and what they perceived to 'be Indian'.

Similarly to the findings of Gilbertson (2007; 2010) on Gujarati Indians living in Wellington negotiating both identities to experience the 'best of both worlds', Nayar (2009), in her study of how Indian immigrant women engage in occupations when settling in a new environment, found that women sought to create a place in which they could work with 'Indian ways' as well as 'New

Zealand ways' as a means to work with 'the best of both worlds' (Nayar, 2009).

Friesen (2008) has explored transnationalism and the Indian diaspora in New Zealand using the following three aspects of transnationalism, family (personal level), media (institutional level) and ethnic associations (institutional level). Where his study included all Indian populations, including recent migrants such as Fijian Indian, this particular thesis only examines a New Zealand born Gujarati sample living in the North Island region of New Zealand.

In her study of traditional values of New Zealand Indians, Raza (1997) found that identification with a group does not always correspond to emotional involvement or a sense of belonging to that group. From her findings, Raza (1997) further suggests ethnic behaviour and ethnic self-definition or level of acculturation are independent because strong ethnic identification is possible without maintaining traditional ethnic behaviours such as language. Limitations of her study lie with her use of self-rating scales to determine the role of highly ranked traditional values in identification with a group, as opposed to gaining an in-depth understanding of the problematic and complex ways in which ethnic identification is negotiated on a daily basis.

The purpose of this thesis is to respond to a gap in the literature and explore conceptions of identity of New Zealand born Indians.

## 2.4 Summary

As Bandyopadhyay (2007) notes, most of the research on the Indian New Zealand population is historical in nature. It tends to focus on the experiences of immigration and settlement of Indians in New Zealand under different policy regimes. Most literature on contemporary Indian identities comes in the form of Masters theses from various universities and a longer book by Bandyopadhyay (Bandyopadhyay, 2010). Although international studies focus more on the hybrid identities of this trans-diasporic group of Indians born and raised outside of India, a lot of the research examines specific contact zones or relationships with cultural elements such as music, gender and religion. Although this study does look at contact zones, it specifically attempts to explore the personal views of participants, their experiences of life in New Zealand and their own accounts of Indian-ness and the way that those identities are negotiated and renegotiated in everyday life.

While many theses which have explored New Zealand identities used grounded theory in their analysis, this study, through an interpretive phenomenological approach, allows participants to reflect on their own personal history and biography in an attempt to connect their individual experiences with the problematic and complex ways in which contemporary New Zealand born Indian identities are reshaped and redefined. The chapter which follows will discuss the methodology used in this study.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction:**

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study to explore the experiences of New Zealand Indians in managing, accepting, rejecting and negotiating their identities. The objective of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the problematic ways in which identities are negotiated on a daily basis, using a sociological perspective to inform the analysis. Different social structures, systems and institutions such as families, work, social groups and sports are used to explore issues of stereotypes, expectations and conformity in performing certain aspects of Indian identity and its influence on the construction of a contemporary Indian identity for the 16 New Zealand born Indians interviewed in this study. This chapter begins with an overview of the research design, describing the type of qualitative method which was used and its appropriateness for the aims of this particular study. Following this, the sampling methods used are discussed, including a description of participants used in the study. A brief section on ethical considerations follows and a description of the data collection process is then outlined. Lastly a discussion on the data analysis process in the study is outlined.

### **3.1 Research Design:**

In order to capture an understanding of the way identities are actually experienced by a New Zealand Indian population, a qualitative design was chosen for this study. Qualitative research designs are useful for examining the experiences of individuals (Neuman, 2006) and were considered the most appropriate form of social inquiry in this instance, as the study set out to explore the personal feelings, beliefs and experiences (Creswell, 1998) of the sample of New Zealand born Indians chosen for this study. One of the advantages of using qualitative methods in exploratory research is that it creates openness between the researcher and participants, with the use of open-ended questions (Pope & Mays, 2000). This allows participants to discuss issues that are important to them in their everyday lives and clarification to be made between the researcher and participant on experiences being discussed, as opposed to the closed-ended questions often used in more structured, quantitative studies, where there is an assumption that all respondents understand and interpret questions and experiences in the same way and clarification cannot be sought.

More specifically, for this study, an interpretive or phenomenological approach was employed where the focus was on how participants of this study made sense of the world around them (Bryman, 2001; Neuman, 2006). The methodology for this approach is centred on the way in which people make sense of their subjective social realities and attach meaning to them (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999). The questions posed in this thesis attempt to go

beyond the meaning of lived experiences to “articulate the pre-reflective level of lived meanings, to make the invisible visible” (Kvale, 1996, p. 52).

Where positivists assume that reality is fixed and directly measurable with only one external reality (Neuman, 2006; Bryman, 2001), the interpretive or phenomenological approach used in this study, places emphasis on the person’s social reality being continuously constructed and reconstructed on the basis of meanings and interpretations derived from their experiences. It was for this reason that qualitative interviewing was chosen over a more quantitative and structured approach for data collection.

Alder and Clark (2003) suggest that less structured interviews provide more opportunities for the researcher to explore in more detail peoples’ backgrounds and experiences, and their attitudes, expectations and perceptions of themselves. It also allows the researcher to examine participants’ life histories and their views about the groups they consider themselves part of. The study’s aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the problematic ways in which Indian ethnicity is negotiated on a daily basis. This was deemed appropriate as it allowed for in-depth discussions to take place and points to be elaborated on. This may not have been achieved if a quantitative method had been employed, as the structured interview or questionnaires rely on closed ended questions (Neuman, 2006; Bryman, 2001) where questions cannot be changed or adapted to further explore participants’ responses, attitudes and beliefs, nor does it allow for clarity to be sought from responses given.

The qualitative interview allows for the participant to share and express in detail, reasons for their response, with the aid of the researcher's encouragement to elaborate on responses given (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Interview questions can also be adapted to allow participants to discuss and share what they deem important with the issues and experiences being discussed. Power is given to the participants to have their voices heard and views shared (Bryman, 2001) as opposed to the interviewer guiding and directing the knowledge and information gained with closed ended questions. This was particularly beneficial for this study as open-ended questions in the interview allows for in-depth information to be gained, where the participants are able to share their experiences in their own terms and express their views, beliefs, expectations and perceptions of complex issues (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Another disadvantage of structured interviews is that it assumes respondents understand and interpret questions in the same way (Alder & Clark, 2003). Arguably, it assumes experiences are shared and interpreted in the same way and does not allow for exploration or explanation. However the less structured approach in qualitative interviewing allows participants to express how they subjectively see and experience the world and make sense of their lives, where questions are adapted, based on their interpretation and understanding and allows the researcher to explore with them the complex interplay between their internal and external experiences in everyday life and interactions.

Qualitative interviews vary from unstructured to semi-structured (Neuman, 2006; Bryman, 2001; McIntyre, 2005), and it was decided that semi-structured interviews would be used in this study to allow the researcher to have an interview guide with indicative questions which could be modified appropriately for different participants. This was to ensure coverage of all topics in each of the interviews conducted (Alder & Clark, 2003). The indicative questions were designed in a way to allow for sociological analysis by allowing the researcher to ask questions for discussions, and an understanding to be gained of the participants' history, personal biography and its interplay with today's social structures and everyday life. This was further emphasised by having participants reflect on whether they believed the problems they faced and experienced were shared by others (a possible public issue) or were theirs individually (a private problem). This was done in a way to allow participants to reflect and share experiences freely without being intimidated or concerned with the theoretical approach being used in their interpretations (key elements of C Wright Mills' sociological imagination). Furthermore, in asking participants to elaborate and share background information allowed the researcher to build rapport with participants by taking interest in listening to their lived accounts and reflections. This also ensured that the sociological thought used during analysis came from participants' own accounts of the interplay of lived experiences and current beliefs, rather than the researcher's interpretation of their lived accounts and reflections.

### **3.2 Sampling Method and Recruitment:**

A combination of snowball sampling and purposive sampling was used to gather a homogenous sample of 16 participants. Purposive sampling was used to establish criteria for participants with certain attributes based on the study's aims and purpose (Berg, 2005). The criteria established for selection was that all participants of this study were Indian by ancestry and were born in New Zealand. This was to avoid heterogeneous groups, where participants from contrasting or different cultural and societal backgrounds (Mertons, 2005), such as being born in a country other than New Zealand, sharing experiences of a nature which may not have been relevant or meet the aim and purpose of this study. It was also intended that participants be between the ages of 18-30. Selection of a sample within this age range was due to maturity of participants and also mirrors the researcher's age group, allowing for a closer empathetic relationship with participants. Also it was less likely that participants within this age range would have children, which may have influenced their conceptions of identity. An attempt was also made to have an even distribution of male and female participants.

Participants were selected using snowball sampling. Kumar (2005) describes snowball sampling as a process using networks where participants are asked to identify others who may be interested in participating, and is often an appropriate way to recruit potential participants with certain attributes and characteristics that are necessary in a study (Berg, 2005). Once participants who met the preferred profile and characteristics were

located they were approached via email, where a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1) was distributed and a follow up phone call was made inviting them to participate in the interview. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they were given an opportunity to ask questions they had regarding the study. Participants were also encouraged to email any questions or concerns they may have had after being invited to participate. Once they had agreed to the study, another phone call was made to arrange a suitable time and place for the interview. During this call, participants were again given an opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns they may have had regarding the interview and study.

The participants recruited for this study were eight females and eight males between 18 – 30 years of age and were born in the North Island region of New Zealand. More specifically, participants were from Auckland, Pukekohe, Rotorua and Wellington. Although 16 participants had been interviewed, only 13 transcripts have been used for this study. Participants of the three excluded transcripts asked to be withdrawn during the data analysis stage of this study, due to bereavement of a family member who each had discussed during the interviews. These participants were from the Pukekohe sample and consisted of two males and one female. Transcripts used in this study consist of seven females and six males. Also, although not an initial criteria for selection in interviews, all participants who were

interviewed were of Gujarati descent, whose religious background was Hinduism.

Table 1 below presents an overview of participants recruited for this study.

**Table 1**  
***Participant Details***

<b>Location</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>
Auckland	22	Female	Single
Auckland	27	Female	Single
Auckland	28	Female	Relationship
Auckland	30	Female	Married
Auckland	28	Male	Single
Auckland	29	Male	Relationship
Pukekohe	(withdrawn)	Female	Single
Pukekohe	(withdrawn)	Male	Single
Pukekohe	(withdrawn)	Male	Relationship
Rotorua	19	Female	Single
Rotorua	27	Female	Relationship
Rotorua	26	Male	Single
Rotorua	29	Male	Married
Wellington	26	Female	Single
Wellington	26	Male	Single
Wellington	27	Male	Single

### **3.3 Ethics:**

All participants were required to sign the Consent Form (see Appendix 2). This Consent Form explained that participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the discussion or refuse to answer questions should they feel the need. These forms were given to participants before conducting the interviews. Participants were also informed that the discussions would be audio-taped with their consent and that they would remain anonymous during the analysis stage and write up of the study. They were also told they could request the tape be stopped at any point during the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Participants were assured confidentiality would be maintained and data collected would be kept for six years and then destroyed, and ethics approval for this study was granted by the university's ethics committee.

### **3.4 Data Collection:**

Data was collected using qualitative interviews. More specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted where the researcher had an interview guide containing indicative questions (See Appendix 4). This guide was used to ensure similar questions were asked in various ways across all interviews conducted. It also allowed for questions to be asked and answered in a way that allowed for different examples and experiences to be discussed, and in some instances further re-discussed in depth. The in-depth interview technique allows for participants to share their ideas,

thoughts and memories in their own words as opposed to the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992).

The indicative questions on the interview guide were pilot tested in an informal setting on a New Zealand born Indian male and a New Zealand born Indian female who had met the criteria for selection but did not formally wish to participate in the actual study. Feedback was sought on ways to improve the interview process and questions asked. No amendments were made to the indicative questions, however pilot testers did offer suggestions on the interview process itself. These suggestions included that participants be told at the beginning of the interview that the interview was not intended to be a formal one but more of a discussion or conversation between the researcher and participants to allow for comfort in disclosure, as those in the pilot test were not sure how informal they could be with the language used and experiences shared or their relationship with the researcher. Alder and Clark (2003) suggest the more traditional qualitative interview techniques require the interviewer to maintain social distance from the participants during the interview by using only cues such as nodding, smiles and murmurs with as little conversation as possible. However, critics of this traditional method disagree with this notion of the interviewer's response being neutral (Alder & Clark, 2003). Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that an attempt should be made by the researcher to minimise any status differences and a closer relationship between the two be made. These changes were made to the interview format, where before the interview began, participants were informed that the interview was not intended to be formal and there were no

specific right or wrong answers being sought. Instead the purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of their perceptions and their understanding of issues discussed.

The researcher also ensured the interviews were conducted in a setting that was familiar and comfortable for the participant. These settings ranged from the participants office at work, their living room at home, or their favourite coffee place.

All interviews were conducted in English by the researcher and ranged from approximately 30 – 60 minutes. Interviews had continued until participants felt they had nothing more to say. Participants were also given the opportunity at the end of the interview to add concluding comments which they felt may be relevant to the study, whether they had been previously discussed or not.

After the interviews were completed, audio tapes were transcribed the following week by the researcher for analysis. Transcripts were reviewed by listening to the interview tape while reading the transcript to check for accuracy. Anonymity was maintained in the transcripts of these interviews by coding participants in the order the interviews were conducted (e.g. the first participant interviewed was coded P1, the second participant interviewed was coded P2, and so forth).

### **3.5 Data Analysis:**

Once transcribing had been completed, a thematic analysis was employed to analyse and look for themes or patterns within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) from which a framework could be created (Gomm, 2004). This involved the identifying themes through a process of reading and re-reading the different transcripts (Rice & Ezzy, 1999; Boyatzis, 1998). The researcher also underwent a process of listening and re-listening to interview tapes, noting down points that were remembered during and at the end of listening to the interviews.

Transcripts were also highlighted according to key themes being discussed across all interviews to allow for comparisons and contrasts to be made between different respondents. The data was coded where themes were allocated, based on the topic of each response. These themes were then revised and classified into sub-themes. Themes and sub-themes were used to make comparisons and contrasts between the different responses both between interviews and within each respondent's own transcripts.

When allocating themes, key concepts from the headers of different sections from which the semi-structured interviews had been divided were used as a preliminary header. These headers were broken into sub-themes and allowed for similarities and differences to be made in relation to experiences and conflicts discussed by participants. The headers used in the interview guide were not necessarily used as theme headers in the results section of this study but as a means to help code and manage the data. In analysing

the data, phrases or themes were highlighted reflecting participants' views on their experiences in mediating and negotiating between their ethnic and national identities. In an attempt to manage the data, the researcher collated responses from the different interviews under the indicative question being answered during those interviews using a highlighter to identify similar themes and contrasts within the transcripts. Quotes from the different interviews were then matched with themes and subthemes and checked with indicative questions used during the interview and individual transcripts to ensure their meanings were not taken out of context.

### **3.6 Summary:**

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodology used in this study. Reasons for using a qualitative research design; including the use of semi-structured interviews for data collection was explained. This was followed by a description of the sampling and recruitment of the 16 participants used in this study. Ethical considerations for this study were also discussed, as well as the actual data collection and thematic analysis employed during the data analysis process. The findings from this analysis are discussed in depth in the chapter which follows.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.0 Introduction:

This study's aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the problematic ways in which identity is negotiated on a daily basis. This was achieved through the use of semi-structured interviews where participants discussed their experiences of identifying, managing and negotiating their ethnicity in different social contexts. Participants also reflected on both current and past accounts of their lives, sharing concerns about a loss of ethnic identity through changes in the society in which they had grown up. These changes, felt by participants, created change in values and norms instilled upon them. This chapter presents results from the thematic analysis conducted in analysing participants' interviews. Table 2 below lists the main themes that were found:

**Table 2**

***Key Themes***

<b>Section</b>	<b>Theme:</b>
5.1	Ethnic Background
5.2	Characteristics of "Being Indian"
5.3	Characteristics of "Being Kiwi"
5.5	Cultural Norms (Indian and New Zealand)
5.6	Differentiating the New Zealand born and India born
5.7	Geographical differences in Indian-ness
5.8	Involvement in Indian Community
5.9	Cool to be Indian: "I wouldn't want to be anything else"

## 4.1 Ethnic Background:

### 4.1.1 Where are you from?’

When asked how participants identified, all except one said they were Indian. Some stressed the fact that they were born in New Zealand as an important factor in their identity, others identified as being “New Zealand Indians” and four participants strongly identified as being Indian only. For those who identified as Indian, being born in New Zealand was not considered an important or defining factor. For one participant, it was important people knew she self-identified as being from India, purposely leaving out she was born in New Zealand:

“it’s like, when I introduce myself, people ask me where I’m from, I always say India, I never say New Zealand... it pisses me off when people try to say I’m Kiwi just because I was born here. I’m Indian, I’m not Kiwi, I guess other New Zealand born Indians do but I don’t...”

(Female, 27, Auckland)

For other participants, being born in New Zealand was an important identifier:

“stressing New Zealand born is important to me, it matters to me because, I guess I do consider myself quite Kiwi so it is a big part of who I am, yes I’m Indian but I also have Kiwi values too you know....”

(Male, 29, Auckland)

The emphasis on being born in New Zealand was also a way for some to differentiate themselves from other Indians living in New Zealand:

“I’ll say I’m Indian, but I’ll also say, but I’m born in New Zealand, like I’ll stress that I was born here [laughs] ... because that’s where I’m originally from and I would want them to know that, like just because I’m Indian doesn’t mean I’m from India, I’m not from India [laughs]...”

(Female, 19 Rotorua)

#### 4.1.2 “How Indian am I”?

When asked what made them Indian, participants attempted to define how Indian or ‘Kiwi’ they perceived themselves to be. One of the ways in which they did this was by allocating a percentage or ratio on how Indian they perceived themselves to be. Most participants said 50:50 or 60:40. Of the four who identified as being Indian, only one identified as being 100% Indian, the others ranged from 60:40, 50:50 and 80-90% Indian, 10-20% Kiwi (although later decided she was 65:45, Indian:Kiwi). While another participant found it to be an everyday confusion, finding it difficult to decide:

“I ask myself that all the time like, how much of me is Indian? I mean I speak the language, kind of read and write and I celebrate occasions and participate in like the religious side of things, but how much of me is really Indian you know, does that even make me Indian enough? I guess I’d say I’m 50:50 Indian and New Zealand but it’s hard ay, it’s a tough question for me to answer, I really don’t know...”

(Female, 30, Auckland)

When asked what was meant by 50:50 Indian and Kiwi, participants shared a common belief that even though being born in New Zealand was simply a national identity or country of birth, it still served a key factor in terms of their ethnic background as the culture was shared and integrated within them:

“...preservation of culture and integration of the culture that I live in makes me about 50:50...I understand the kind of cultural norms of being an Indian and also the cultural norms of living in a European society...”

(Male, 26, Wellington)

#### **4.1.3 Census:**

When asked which ethnic categories they would identify with on the New Zealand census form, all participants, including the participant who initially identified as a “Kiwi”, said that they would circle/tick the “Indian” category. Some of the participants said they would select the “Other” ethnicity category and then specify “New Zealand Indian” or “New Zealand born Indian”. Half of the participants interviewed believed it was important to distinguish between the different social categories of Indians living in New Zealand:

“yeah like I don’t have a problem being classified as Indian because that’s what I am but then I think there should be that distinction you know, they should have like Fiji-Indian, Indian and New Zealand Indian because we’re all different in our own right, it’s like how they have Pacific Islander and lump everyone under that one group but then I could be New Zealand, Indian and Pacific because we live in the Pacific [laughs] I don’t know, they should make the distinction I think...”

(Male, 28, Auckland)

## 4.2 Characteristics of “Being Indian”:

For all participants who identified as being ethnically Indian, the particular characteristics and behaviours that they associated with ‘being Indian’ were largely shaped and influenced by their families. The role of parents in affirming or rejecting the identity claims of their children and the nature of their family upbringing were clearly important:

“it’s just, I don’t know, we’ve always been taught and told that we’re Indian you know like growing up mum and dad always said that we’re Indian so we’ve always been Indian, that’s just how it’s been...”

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

Many of the participants emphasised the importance of particular cultural and social practices that were shared within the wider family unit as being a critical determinant of their identity. Some of the practices and protocols around the preparation and consumption of food, the significance of religion, the importance of the family itself and etiquette around the use of the family name were all considered key determinants of one’s Indian-ness. This also included the importance of the family business as a way of reinforcing the expectations and obligations associated with family and community. Language was also deemed a critical characteristic of ‘being Indian’. Participant’s views on the significance of each of these factors are discussed in more depth below.

#### 4.2.1 Food:

Food was considered to be a major part of Indian culture for the participants. Many felt that from birth they had been raised to eat curries and use their fingers rather than utensils at the dinner table:

“having curry is important because that’s how we’ve been brought up like eating with your fingers not a knife and fork, if I ate with a knife and fork mum would kind of question me, like she won’t say no but she’d find it kind of rude in front of the family, it’s hard to explain, if my friends were there she wouldn’t mind but if it’s just us, yeah, nah [shaking her head and laughs] she wouldn’t like it ay...”

(Female, 27, Rotorua)

However, experiences in India with different eating practices also seemed to confuse participants:

“yeah like I was always taught to eat with my fingers but then when I went to India and stayed with my wife’s family, they were all eating with a knife and fork so normally, if I’m in the gama, I’ll sit on the floor and eat with my fingers you know, and I like doing that plus you fit in with everyone else, but then if I ate with my fingers at her house I would have looked out of place, so it’s kind of funny that the practice was different [laughs]...”

(Male, 29, Rotorua)

Offering guests Indian food such as curries and homemade snacks was also considered a common Indian practice that participants felt they had been raised with. Indeed, the type of food offered was deemed a key factor that separated Indians from non-Indian groups:

“I think a big part of Indian culture is food like when you go to someone’s place they don’t make you a roast, they make you curry and the curry itself in that house is like an experience like you don’t get biscuits or cookies you get dokhra or something, yeah you get stuff that’s homemade, whereas if you go to a gora’s house or European you just get biscuits or cake that’s been bought. When you go to an Indian person’s house you get something that’s been homemade like sweets and stuff and it’s a big deal you know, you have to offer it, you wouldn’t find that in a European house...”

(Male, 29, Auckland)

#### **4.2.2 Religion and Practice:**

Religion was considered to be a critical dimension of being Indian for all participants. Each of the participants practiced Hinduism. Although some of the participants were more committed to Hinduism than others, all acknowledged that the values instilled in them came from their religious beliefs - Hinduism:

“being Indian, like there’s a religious side to it and not everyone can understand that...”

(26, Female, Wellington)

“Religious beliefs keep me very connected, like you have to think about things every day and it’s usually to do with religion like things you eat, no beef, or things like using your right hand, that whole turning your back to Bhagwan [God] as a concept teaches you, you know like you shouldn’t turn your back to people, just little things every day and you don’t have to be very religious to know, if you’re Hindu you’re instantly connected whether you want to be or not, that’s what I reckon anyway...”

(Female, 22, Auckland)

The actual practice of prayer each morning was also deemed important by participants, connecting them every day to their Indian identity, and was something that was taught by parents:

“religion actually, would be the main one for me, like praying every morning, lighting the diwar, I do it more at home in Rotorua than Auckland but if I have exams or a test you know, I’ll pray, even after, just something mum’s taught me to do ever since we were little, every morning before you go to school or leave the house, take some Prasad...”

(Female, 19, Rotorua)

For the one participant who did not identify as ethnically Indian, her practice of certain attributes of Hinduism also connected her to Indian-ness:

“like I don’t eat beef because I’m Hindu and I understand why we don’t eat beef you know, I suppose that in a way makes me Indian because you can’t really convert to Hinduism can you? You’re either born Hindu or you’re

not and I was born a Hindu which I guess would make me Indian because you can't be Hindu if you're not Indian right? [laughs] yeah okay so maybe I'm not completely Kiwi after all [laughs]..."

(Female, 28, Auckland)

#### **4.2.2.1 Conflicts in Practice:**

Some participants felt or experienced conflicts when practicing customs they associated with religion, especially when they were children because they did not understand why certain practices or rituals were followed. While some participants were able to ask parents why certain things were done, others felt they were not raised in an environment where they could ask those kinds of more fundamental questions. This ultimately impacted on their feelings of connectedness:

"As a teenager I didn't understand why I had to go to the temple and do certain things like my parents forced me a lot and I didn't understand why we had to, I didn't understand what they were doing and why and I wasn't brought up in an environment where you can just ask you know, like I just didn't understand and it made me kind of resent it..."

(Female, 30, Auckland)

Others who were able to ask their parents found that a lot of the rituals, practices and customs followed were enforced

because that was what their parents had taught them and their grandparents before them and so on. Many of the participants recalled occasions where their parents had difficulty explaining the meaning of certain rituals. In response the participants themselves would 'Google' or read about those rituals and explain to their parents. Their parents would respond in ways that suggested they already knew:

"I think with me, like I'll ask questions about why we have to do something and it's not because I don't believe or don't want to believe it's just I want to know why we're doing something so I'll ask my parents but they can't answer my questions and I think it's because religion was sort of forced upon them, you do what you're told and don't ask questions so I have to find the answer myself..."

(Female, 30, Auckland)

"it's funny because I like to read up on stuff, I think it's important and so I'll read something about rituals and I'll go and tell mum like hey did you know and whatever it is, and she'll act like she knew but I know when I tried to ask, she couldn't tell me [laughs] or when people come over I'll hear dad telling visitors what I've just told them like it's their own knowledge [laughs and shakes her head]..."

(Female, 22, Auckland)

Another potential conflict that had to be navigated by the research participants was in relation to certain rules and

beliefs. One participant in particular felt that her beliefs around the importance of vegetarianism had to be suspended in different social settings. This was specifically the case in the work environment, where she did not want to appear rude towards clients or management:

“sometimes you go to a conference and there’s no vegetarian food and you’re dealing with your clients and so you have to pick the ham out of the salad and you’ll eat it or something like that and I would feel uncomfortable with that but then sometimes for the sake of it I’ll have to but I wish it wasn’t like that, like you don’t have time to explain yourself because people don’t get it so you just have to fake it for the sake of it sometimes...”

(Female, 22, Auckland)

#### **4.2.3 Family:**

Family, for all participants was a fundamental dimension of Indian culture. Participants spoke of the importance of family in their upbringing and connecting them to their Indian-ness. Indeed, many defined Indian culture as being “very family oriented”:

“from a values perspective, I guess Indians are more family orientated you know, it’s all like sort of about your family and your culture things like that, when you go to say a wedding or something you go with your family, it’s a family invite and you all help out, everything is done with the family, family first...”

(Male, 27, Wellington)

Participants also felt a sense of responsibility as Indian to look after family and aging family members:

“being Indian means to me, like having a lot of values, a lot of good morals and stuff like good family values, being quite close and it’s quite important to get on with your family and stuff and help your family when you need to and when they’re old you should look after them like if mum and dad are really old I wouldn’t put them in a rest home or anything like that, it’s not the Indian way...”

(Female, 27, Auckland)

#### **4.2.4 Family Name:**

Views on the centrality of the family name and its importance for an Indian identity varied between participants in two ways. First, some believed the family name to be a critical axis of identity as it was something that was passed on from generation to generation, and with it came a specific history connecting people to their ancestral roots in India. It was also used as an important way that others could acknowledge a person’s background and then place that person within existing networks of family and community. This was particularly important, for example, in partner selection, where knowing a person’s parents and their ancestral connections was a critical factor in the acceptance of that person by the family. Other participants suggested that family name was losing its importance and significance with each new generation of Indians born in New Zealand. Those who felt family name was still important saw the new

generation's view as a loss of identity both for those individuals and Indian society as a whole:

“family name is important it's partly how you identify and for Indians your family name kind of ties in with history and identity. The older generation is more concerned about family name but I think the younger or like the newer generation, they don't seem to care ay which is sad because they don't realise how big a loss it is they don't understand that your history connects you and helps identify you. Like when you bring a girl home, the questions are about her family. If you know your history you get a better understanding of the person and family name is a big part of this...”

(Male, 29, Rotorua)

“Yeah like what I do affects my parents and vice versa, it's the family name thing like if I do something and people hear about it, it won't just affect me, it'll affect my sisters as well because they come from this family and the values instilled by this family you know, it's a big deal ...”

(Male, 28, Auckland)

Others believed that although it once was important for generations before them, family name no longer served significance and was slowly dying out even with the older generation of Indians living in New Zealand:

“family name, I think it used to be a big deal, like for the older generations like our grandparents and the older aunties especially, but I think it's dying out, like you don't hear mum and dad saying things like oh what will other people say you know? I think it's less important, yeah nah I don't think they care to be honest [laughs]...”

(Female, 26, Wellington)

#### **4.2.5 Connected to Indian-ness:**

One participant, who identified simply as being a “New Zealander”, said that she felt no connection with India. She indicated that this may be a result of never having travelled to India so she felt no sense of having ongoing connections there compared to the sense of belonging having been born in New Zealand and adopting the values and interest produced and maintained in a New Zealand social context:

“I feel like a New Zealander, brought up and I guess adapted to New Zealand life in a way like yeah it’s not how my parents are, well I don’t think I’m like how my parents are so I guess that’s how I see myself as a New Zealander not really an Indian [laughs] ... I think differently and I don’t really agree with some of the customs and traditions, I don’t care what people think and well I’ve never actually been to India so yeah [laughs] it could be something to do with the fact that I’ve never been to India, so I can’t really relate to that...”

(Female, 28, Auckland)

#### **4.2.6 Dairy Owners:**

Participants also shared stories about growing up in the family fruit shop or local dairy and felt it was a critical part of being Indian. Although those common stories were told with humour (particularly in relation to the stereotypes they had encountered growing up), the participants also reflected on the close sense of connectedness that had developed as a result. Indeed, the family business was seen as a way of connecting those who had grown up primarily in New Zealand with their parents and the cultural values and social practices they believed were central features of Indian identity

and culture. Using humour, participants also subverted some of the more pernicious stereotypes that are often associated with the occupational concentration of Indian migrants in New Zealand by redefining and reclaiming an iconic place for Indians within New Zealand culture:

“I think an Indian dairy owner should be part of the Kiwi iconology because everyone knows when you walk into the local dairy the owner’s going to be Indian, the Indian dairy owner for New Zealand is like the jandal you know [laughs], it also connects us Indians too because it was the family business, it’s what instilled us with that hard working discipline and you have to admit, we’re known for our hard working ethics, it’s something we as kids of our Indian parents try to live up to, that hard working ethic...”

(Male, 29, Rotorua)

Other participants felt that a loss in dairy ownership would also lead to a loss in Indian identity in terms of family values instilled through the running of the family business:

“when you think about it though, the next generation now don’t want to work in dairies, maybe because they’re too ashamed but also because they want a career which makes mum and dad proud because that’s what they want for us too but I think that also takes away from our identity too, the family fruit shop or dairy, to me, is part of our heritage in a way, like the \$1 lolly bags, man that started with the Indian dairy owners [laughs] like we joke about it and it’s all good but at the same time it’s serious ay, because it’s an identifier for us, it kind of connected us to family and our parents because the shop was a family thing, the memories growing up...”

(Female, 27, Auckland)

#### 4.2.7 Bollywood Actors:

Some participants felt that a knowledge or familiarity with Indian popular culture and, in particular, Bollywood movies and Bollywood actors, was an important way to connect with other Indians, whether those people were born in New Zealand or not. A sense of collective identity could be generated with the use of humour that could only be shared and understood by cultural insiders as a quintessential expression of “being Indian”:

“Amitabh Bachchan, let’s face it, only an Indian can apply for a Foodtown card with a Bollywood actor’s name on it and at the same time get a smile from the Indian checkout people ay, it’s classic [laughs] we get to have our little inside jokes and it’s funny you know, it’s like an instant connect, and it’s cool because no one else has that. Like if you’re Pakeha and you have I don’t know, Tom Cruise on your Foodtown card, it’s not as funny as when an Indian sees Amitabh Bachchan or Rani Mukerji on an Indian’s card [laughs]...”

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

While some participants found humour in embracing Bollywood, others felt the need to play down their interest in Bollywood, especially when around their Kiwi friends:

“I’ll watch Bollywood movies with mum and dad sometimes, it’s like our down time in a way and it’s fine you know but then when I watch with some of my Kiwi friends I feel like I have to be careful, like I have to down play my enthusiasm [laughs] I can’t help it, I just get embarrassed even when they get really into it but with mum and dad watching the classic Bollywood movies is like bonding time [laughs]”

(Female, 19, Rotorua)

#### **4.2.8 Cricket**

A number of participants believed cricket provided a space or means to build a bond and sense of connection with their fathers which in turn linked their fathers back to India providing them too with a sense of connectedness:

“getting up at 3am to watch the cricket with dad was like a Kiwi kid getting up to watch the All Blacks with their dad you know, it’s a way of bonding, but the Indian way of bonding [laughs] ...”

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

“it’s good like you get up or you make it a point to sit down and watch the game with dad because that’s what he did with his dad back home in India you know, so in a way you’re creating a tradition that’s kind of historical in a way, if that makes sense...”

(Male, 27, Wellington)

#### **4.2.9 Gujarati Slang/Gestures:**

Although the majority of participants interviewed were not fluent Gujarati speakers, they all believed language itself to be a key identifier of being Indian, more so in their ability to use certain words (both vulgar and slang words) in everyday conversations with their peers. Not only was it seen as an identifier, it was also widely seen as a way to connect with other Indians and something they could learn and share that was specific to them. Participants also believe non-verbal language and gestures to be a humorous characteristic of

being Indian and a way to blend in and feel somewhat accepted in group situations:

“if you can’t do the hand gesture and head tilt when you’re talking, you’re just not Indian, it’s inherent in us [laughs] seriously though I think it’s one of the things that helps us learn our language too, talking with the Indian accent you learn to speak like your parents instead of that Kiwi-Gujarati and that Kiwi accent when we speak Gujarati totally separates us from Indians back in India ay, it’s embarrassing when you go there man [laughs] ...”

(Male, 28, Auckland)

#### **4.2.10 Travel to India:**

All but one participant shared experiences of having travelled to India. Those who had travelled to India shared reflections on feeling a stronger sense of connectedness to their Indian roots and believed this visit was essential to building and further developing that understanding of their Indian-ness:

“once you go to India, everything just makes sense, like you get a feel for where your parents or your grandparents came from and why they are the way they are you know, like everything is just so connected, that’s not even the right word for it, people are just so, like it’s just totally different but in a good way, it’s kind of therapeutic too and you come back feeling re-connected...”

(Female, 27, Rotorua)

“just give me two weeks in the gama [village] and I’m back to speaking fluent Gujarati, it’s great, I love it...”

(Male, 26, Wellington)

All participants who had been to India discussed positive experiences and their desire to return. Whether they had travelled to tourist locations or as religious pilgrims or had not travelled to India, each of the participants all wished to make a journey to the gama or village their parents had come from, with some even wishing to stay there:

“yeah I’d live there, like honestly, I would love to live there for the rest of my life...”

(Female, 27, Auckland)

“if I had the chance to go back, and I’m hoping to within the next couple of years I’d definitely just go to the gama ay, one of my biggest regrets from as a child was not getting involved as much as I could have, like I was kind of stand-offish and I really regret that, I just want to go to the gama ay...”

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

#### **4.2.10.1 Feeling less Indian and more Kiwi:**

Although participants who had travelled to India shared positive experiences, they also shared accounts of having felt like an outsider from those in India, which impacted not only on the way they viewed themselves as Indian but also as a way to differentiate themselves from Indians:

“nah I’m way too cool for them [laughs] nah I don’t consider myself, like I don’t feel Indian when I’m over there, I feel more of a Kiwi, I think it’s because we’re so different like the cultures are just so different. In India things are just done so slowly and you have naps in the afternoon, whereas here you just can’t have that kind of

life you have to make money and pay the bills whereas in India you can just stay in the gama [village] and live off the land, yeah...”

(Male, 29, Auckland)

These ambiguous feelings about identifying as Indian were further compounded by being treated as visitors. Despite their connections to India, some participants felt they were inevitably treated as outsiders:

“I think when we go to India, we’re treated as visitors and that makes me feel not so Indian I don’t feel like them I feel like, yeah I’m a Kiwi, I think they definitely treat me as an outsider too, yeah definitely [nods] ..”

(Male, 28, Auckland)

Although many participants felt that they were viewed as foreigners or outsiders in these contexts, others acknowledged that spending time with the local children in the gama [village] helped them adapt and regain their feeling of connectedness of being Indian:

“they see me as a foreigner but I don’t care, I’m still Indian and I love it there, I’d live in the gama if I could...”

(Female, 26, Wellington)

“they see me as an outsider initially but I don’t care, I’ll talk and spend time with them and mix with them and they eventually accept me as one of them, I’ll dress Indian too, I just love it...”

(Female, 22, Auckland)

### 4.3 Characteristics of “Being Kiwi”

For some participants, being Kiwi simply meant being born in New Zealand and nothing more, it was their national identity:

“I think the only thing that makes me Kiwi is the fact that I’m born here, it’s a national identity...”

(Female, 27, Auckland)

“I guess just being born and raised in New Zealand...”

(Male, 27, Wellington)

“just being born in New Zealand really...”

(Female, 19, Rotorua)

While others associated being Kiwi with certain types of attributes and behaviours or hobbies:

“I think being Kiwi is like being free and relaxed, doing things like going to the beach and enjoying the park, or out to dinner with friends and stuff, yeah like being free and being able to do what you want when you want which is different to being Indian because most Indian parents don’t like when we go out all the time, they want us to be home after work, helping with the family or in the garden or for girls in the kitchen type thing, whereas being Kiwi, it’s quite different ay...”

(Male, 29, Auckland)

#### 4.4 Cultural Norms (Indian and New Zealand)

Those participants who strongly associated being New Zealand born as an important identifier, emphasised the way their beliefs and values differed from those of their parents or grandparents:

“like for me, being New Zealand born or like being Kiwi, it kind of gives me the ability to ask certain questions, questions my parents wouldn’t have been able to ask back in their day you know, it wasn’t considered normal or appropriate, it was seen as being disrespectful but like if I disagree with something I can question it...”

(Female, 26, Wellington)

Similarly, another participant believed that her New Zealand identity allowed her a different perspective and interpretation to certain religious scriptures which in turn extended to other aspects of her way of thinking:

“for me that’s how my Kiwi-ness comes into this, with the scriptures people haven’t actually interpreted it correctly like what happens is we’ve got the Mahabharat right, and it’s all about like fighting amongst the family but some people think that they’re actually fighting with swords and knives and punching each other but it’s actually where I can use my Kiwi knowledge to understand that it actually represents the conflict within your head or in your mind that you have on a regular basis you know, like I can interpret it for what it’s trying to portray rather than taking it at face value which is what I find a lot of people tend to do, even in India, so I think part of me being Kiwi sort of opens my mind a bit so I’m not so narrow or closed minded...”

(Female, 22, Auckland)

#### **4.5 Differentiating the New Zealand born with the India born**

Participants also felt there was a difference between Indians living in New Zealand who were born here compared to those who were here from India.

These differences were in terms of dress:

“like when you go to a wedding, you can tell when someone’s from India because they wear that tinsel looking stuff and [laughs] like not to be stink or anything but they look like they’re wearing the entire jewellery store [laughs again] or the guys have gel in their hair and wear those Michael Jackson ‘thriller’ jackets, you can just tell ay [laughs] ...”

(Female, 28, Auckland)

For others it was a difference in values that served as a key difference which led to frustration and sometimes confusion:

“in India, spending’s not that big a deal because everything is there and you can live off the land kind of thing and the house is all there because it’s the big family house, but here there’s a lot of pressure you know, like we’ve been taught to save our money, buy a house, invest in the future but my husband doesn’t see it that way, he wants to live now and so after our mortgage payments go through there’s no money left to save because he spends it, it’s really frustrating but I think it comes down to difference in values...”

(Female, 30, Auckland)

##### **4.5.1 Gender Roles/Difference**

The differences in the roles of men and women and the gendered nature of the social and cultural expectations were also raised by a number of participants as critical dimensions of Indian identity. This was particularly important for those participants who had married

partners from India and had to confront different sets of expectations about marital and gender roles. These potential conflicts were widely seen as resulting from societal differences and experiences.

#### **4.5.1.1 New Zealand born wife and Indian born Husband**

“my husband and his family, I think they’re used to having servants in India who do the housework, like the cooking and cleaning and they don’t realise how much work there is. We were taught to do it ourselves you know, mum raised us to do all the housework, ground our own spices, mince our own garlic and ginger and chilli, all of that so that’s what I do and in a way my mother-in-law expects me to do it but my husband gets annoyed because he feels that’s all I ever do and want to do, housework, but I feel it’s my obligation as an Indian wife, that’s just how we were raised I guess and like, who else is going to do it...”

(Female, 30, Auckland)

#### **4.5.1.2 New Zealand born Husband and Indian born Wife**

“my wife and I were talking about this the other day actually, for her, she’s not used to doing the housework because back home she was saying they have help, like with servants who do it and it frustrates her not having that help and support, for me, coming from a home with just a brother, mum and dad, mum kind of did everything like the housework side of things, cooking and cleaning and dad and us boys cut the hedge, mowed the lawns, fixed the house, that sort of stuff so I have that expectation, or not expectation but I just feel that’s how it is because that’s how it’s been you know, wife in the kitchen, me in the shed [laughs] oh but don’t tell my wife ay [laughs] it’s just different...”

(Male, 29, Rotorua)

When asked why they believed there was a difference between the attitudes towards gender roles today and the values and expectations that either parents had instilled in them, a number of participants emphasised the different social contexts that existed in India and New Zealand:

“maybe it’s because like our parents left India a long time ago you know, like when it was the norm for women to stay at home and do all the housework like cooking and cleaning and all that and then coming here and having Indian kids, there’s kind of a lot of pressure to raise us the ‘right way’ if you like, but what they don’t realise is things in India are changing too, people are becoming kind of westernised in their thinking and the roles are changing too, like India’s changing, especially the urban areas like where my wife is from, but our parents don’t get to see this and they’re still kind of raising us to take on those traditional roles, it’s pressure for them too you know and I kind of get that...”

(Male, 29, Rotorua)

Other participants questioned whether it was simply a generational difference at play with either their parents adopting a more “Kiwi” outlook of gender equality or possibly their younger siblings adapting to the change themselves:

“it’s different with the newer generation, like my sister, for her it’s different, her husband helps her out with the chores, like he’ll even cook sometimes, but then I sometimes wonder too, is it really that much of a generation gap? Six years, is it really that much of a difference, I don’t know...”

(Female, 30, Auckland)

#### 4.6 Geographical differences in Indian-ness

When reflecting on the differences of Indians living in Rotorua, Wellington and Auckland, those who were originally from Rotorua or Wellington felt that there were clear differences between Indians in these different locations. This was particularly the case between those Indians living in Rotorua and Wellington and those living in Auckland:

“well some of the Indians I’ve met in Auckland are more, like fresher, well you know, come over from India like someone of the ones I’ve met in Auckland and I suppose in Rotorua being more of a smaller community it’s more tight knit, like you sort of know everyone and it’s a lot more of a closer community and you sort of just be basically on par with everyone whereas in Auckland it’s a little bit more dispersed I think...”

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

“yeah like there’s a lot more Indians in Auckland compared to Rotorua [laughs] like when I first got here I saw it as a shock, like I couldn’t believe there were so many here [laughs] some act really up themselves but others are okay I guess, there’s so many in Auckland though, like heaps...”

(Female, 27, Rotorua)

Those participants who were from Wellington and Rotorua also suggested that there were differences between Auckland Indians and Indians in other parts of the country. These perceived points of difference included knowledge of Indian practices; communication with parents and parental knowledge of their drinking. These issues are further presented in the section below.

#### **4.6.1 Knowledge of Indian Practices**

Wellington and Rotorua participants, from their encounters with Auckland Indians, shared beliefs that Auckland-Indians had little to no knowledge of certain Indian practices, including key celebrations and festivals:

“like you go up to Auckland and they just have no idea why we celebrate Diwali or the significance of Navrati. I remember being in Auckland for Navrati and some of my Indian friends would go regularly, almost every night but when my flat mate at the time asked them what it was all about, they couldn’t tell them, they literally had no freaking idea...”

(Male, 26, Wellington)

#### **4.6.2 Relationship/Communication with parents**

When reflecting on communication with parents, Auckland Indians were perceived by Wellington and Rotorua participants to lack clear and honest communication. They were perceived to be constantly lying as a means to appear to be conforming to practices their parents deemed appropriate. In contrast to their Auckland Indian peers, Wellington and Rotorua participants believed they shared a more open and honest relationship with their parents where they could tell the truth about drinking or socialising with friends – both male and/or female:

“completely different, like polar opposites, so basically Wellington Indians are much more, their parents and children communicate more and are far more trusting of each other, whereas all my experiences with all my Indian friends in

Auckland are completely opposite like the parents don't trust them..."

(Male, 27, Wellington)

"it's just a really weird dynamic like we grew up at a time when all of my mates, there's like 20 of us Indians and we always used to hang out like every weekend from like growing up from secondary school onwards and it was like an even mix of guys and girls and we'd always just go to one of our friend's houses and drink there and party and always our parents would be there and know what's going on and who's there but here in Auckland they do things like they'll hire a hotel and it's just like, it's more secretive and more for fear of like, I don't know embarrassment or traditionalism or something like that, I've never understood why because you'd think that Auckland being a bigger centre would be more open and more accepting to Western ways or different ways of expressing culture.."

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

#### **4.7 Involvement in Indian Community**

For participants, involvement in the Indian community was defined by their participation or attendance at different types of gatherings such as Diwali celebrations, Navrati or family weddings:

"I would say I'm quite involved like I'll go to weddings and Navrati with the family and I'll celebrate Diwali them, Raksha Bandhan too, we don't really go to the mandir much but in terms of festivals, yeah..."

(Male, 27, Wellington)

"I think as a kid I was more involved like, we'd have to participate in the Diwali concerts and stuff [laughs] I hated doing that but I can see why my parents made us, haven't done anything like that since Sunday school though [laughs]...:

(Female, 27, Auckland)

Other involvement was considered in participation or membership with the Indian Association.

#### **4.7.1 Indian Association**

Participant's involvement within the Indian Association from their city of origin within New Zealand was largely dependent on their parent's involvement within the Association. If parents were not involved, then they were less likely to be involved. Those who were from the smaller regions, Wellington and Rotorua shared positive experiences and views towards the Association whereas Auckland Indian participants held a much more negative view. These differences are presented below.

##### **4.7.1.1 Auckland Indian Association**

Auckland Indians perceived the Auckland Indian Association to be very selective in its membership and very sports oriented for those members of the younger generation involved:

“for me I think there seems to be a lot of segregation between the committees like with donations and stuff they'd rather use it for the sporting committee but quite reluctant when say the temple committee calls for help with a wedding, or roofing repairs, stuff like that and even though the committee members kids are involved, they don't really care...”

(Female, 22, Auckland)

“it’s kind of like the committee is more about status over culture which is really sad, it seems really commercial like they just want to make money there’s very little in terms of actual culture...”

(Male, 28, Auckland)

#### **4.7.1.2 Wellington Indian Association**

The issues and concerns shared by Wellington participants was the lack of involvement from the younger generation of Indians. A key issue being addressed was that of succession and how to get more involvement from the younger generation of Indians living in Wellington:

“there’s a whole effort about like succession planning that’s what they’re talking about at the moment like trying to work out how we’re going to get the youth, the younger Indians into the association to keep it alive when all these like older people leave...”

(Male, 26, Wellington)

#### **4.7.1.3 Rotorua Indian Association**

Participants who were from Rotorua were quite content in the younger generation’s involvement in the Rotorua Indian Association. All but one of the participants from Rotorua who were interviewed were involved in the Association. Reasons shared for their involvement was heavily influenced by their parent’s involvement; if their parents were members of the

committee, they were likely to be too. The only concern Rotorua Indians had regarding involvement of the younger generation was whether those who were heavily involved would stay in Rotorua:

“I think with Rotorua like it’s got, there’s quite a few younger people who are getting involved so I think it will be, the question is whether or not they’ll stay in Rotorua and even though they’re quite heavily involved it’s just whether or not they stay in Rotorua...”

(Male, 26, Rotorua)

When asked what would happen if they left Rotorua, participants did show too much concern:

“I don’t know, I think there’s enough people there to keep it going but whether or not it will be in say the same capacity as it is now, I don’t know, I think it would be alright though because they’re really tight knit...”

(Female, 27, Rotorua)

#### **4.7.2 Gujarati School**

Experiences of Gujarati school differed for participants in Auckland and Rotorua although both shared common experiences of a lack of learning.

##### **4.7.2.1 Auckland**

Experiences shared by Auckland Indians were generally negative. All participants in Auckland who attended Gujarati school believed the teaching environment played a role in their

failure to learn how to read or write in Gujarati but also shared the belief that its significance and importance was realised as they grew older:

“I hated going ay, man I hated it so much but we didn’t have a choice as kids... looking back though, I think when we went to India, I was kind of glad they made us go, it made sense after India and I kind of wish now that I’d paid more attention back then, wish I understood more....”

(Female, 27, Auckland)

“the teachers were really mean, like if you got something wrong, instead of correcting you they’d just yell at you [laughs] and I’d always get things wrong so they were always yelling at me, I hated it...”

(Male, 29, Auckland)

Participants also felt it important to ensure their children would also attend Gujarati school despite their negative experiences:

“if I had to go through it, they have to too [laughs] no but I think it’s really good, may not understand it at the time but as you get older, it’s a way to keep you connected and in a funny sense our parent’s way of teaching us, but then it would also be up to me as a parent to use my experiences to make my kids understand you know, communicate with them better so they don’t have the same regrets I have now...”

(Male, 28, Auckland)

#### **4.7.2.2 Rotorua**

Experiences of Gujarati school for participants who were originally from Rotorua were deemed quite positive. Although many believed attending Gujarati school was more for the social aspect as opposed to the actual learning of Gujarati, like the Auckland Indians they had regrets:

“I didn’t resent it, I did enjoy it but more the spending time with the people [laughs]...”

(Female, 19, Rotorua)

“yeah Gujarati school, I actually didn’t mind it but I think I went more for the social side, hanging out with the boys and making friends [laughs] it’s good because we’re still really tight, but looking back, yeah I wish I’d paid more attention because I can’t read or write in Gujarati and I think it’s a good thing to know...”

(Male, 29, Rotorua)

#### **4.8 Cool to be Indian: “I wouldn’t want to be anything else”**

Upon reflecting on how they saw themselves ethnically, participants all shared a common view on things they took for granted in terms of Indian culture, concluding that it was cool to be Indian and they would not want to be anything else:

“just thinking about it, like there’s a lot of things we take for granted ay, and I’m only really thinking about it because you got me talking

about it [laughs] so much we take for granted in terms of us being unique, like the humour side too, we have so many laughs whether it's mocking our parents or just using our language and mocking each other, so much and when we get together it's just fun like the celebrations, a lot of work but there is that connectedness you know, we wouldn't have all that if we weren't Indian and it distinguishes us from everyone else..."

(Female, 26, Wellington)

#### **4.9 Summary**

Overall, the main themes which emerged from the data collected in the semi-structured interviews describe how participants identified ethnically - defining their ethnic background, both personally and socially through interactions and on the New Zealand Census form. The characteristics used to define themselves as 'being Indian' – being largely dependent and shaped by family, further alluded to key determinants of one's Indian-ness. The key attributes of their identities were that they self-defined as 'being Kiwi', along with perceived differences in cultural norms between their Indian and New Zealand identities. Differences were felt by participants not only between themselves and Indians in India, or born in India living in New Zealand, but also differences were apparent among New Zealand born Indians living in New Zealand. A theme further explained illustrated, upon reflection, how they saw themselves ethnically. The chapter which follows discusses these findings with reference to previous literature on the concept of 'identity', ethnicity and studies on Indian identities.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.0 Introduction:**

The following sections summarise and discuss the findings of this research, comparing and contrasting participants' beliefs and experiences with findings from previous literature. It is important to note that the findings of this study are not intended to be representative of the wider New Zealand born Indian or Gujarati population. Instead they are representative of the 13 participant interviews used in this study. The section below is divided into sub-sections, each detailing key themes that were derived from the thematic analysis of the data collected in the semi-structured interviews.

### **5.1 Ethnic Background:**

Similar to data from the New Zealand census in 2006 specifying that increasing numbers of those identifying as Indian were actually born in New Zealand, this study found that regardless of having been born in New Zealand or identifying as New Zealand Indian, Indian or a New Zealander, participants all identified as "Indian" when filling in the ethnicity section of the New Zealand Census. Findings from this study found that reasons for this ethnic identification were largely ancestrally driven where participants often felt because their parents were Indian and they were born Indian, ethnically, they were Indian. This constituted an ascribed identity they did not question. Geertz (1973) points out that discussions on ethnicity should acknowledge

that membership and identification in an ethnic group is often experienced as an ascribed identity, particularly from birth.

Furthermore, approximately one in three (31%) participants in this study strongly self-identified as being only Indian, compared with almost one in four (23%) identifying as Indian in the New Zealand Census (2006), having been born here in New Zealand. However, it is important to note that the sample size for this study was comparatively very small compared to that of the New Zealand Census and also only a small group of Gujarati Indians born in Wellington, Rotorua and Auckland were used for this study.

When participants were asked how they identified during the semi-structured interviews, their responses were more nuanced than the simple ethnic categories used in the New Zealand census. Indeed, some participants deemed it important to stress their national, New Zealand based, identity alongside their ethnic, Indian, identity. This was used as a way of differentiating themselves from those born in India, and now residing in New Zealand. National identity was also used by the participants to differentiate between what they believed to be their Indian values and Kiwi or New Zealand values and preferences. This highlighted the way that groups and individuals differentiate themselves from others in the course of their everyday lives, a central aspect of ethnicity (Zelinsky & Lee, 1998).

Findings from this study also reinforce notions of the problematic and complex ways in which ethnic identity is negotiated on a daily basis. When participants attempted to put a ratio or percentage on how strongly they

perceived themselves to be Indian or Kiwi, many found it difficult, despite strongly identifying as Indian or New Zealand Indian. This suggests that although they strongly identified with one or two particular ethnic groups, ethnicity was still constantly being negotiated and renegotiated within a given context. This gives weight to Fenton's (1999) argument that "we should understand ethnicity as a social process, as moving boundaries and identities which people collectively and individually draw around themselves in their social lives" (p. 10). This is a point further emphasised by Nagel (1994) who suggests ethnic identity is fluid and constantly created, recreated and often transformed in modern societies.

## **5.2 Characteristics of "Being Indian"**

Although identifying as Indian was ancestrally based for participants of this study when it came to defining what being Indian meant to them, participants referred to key elements of cultural practice as critical features of Indian identity. Culture in a sociological sense is a complex system of meaning and behaviour (Anderson & Taylor, 2013) which includes practices, languages, symbols, beliefs and values created by people or groups to deal with real life problems (Furze, Savy, Brym & Lie, 2008). This is similar to the argument made by Williams (2010), who suggests that when speaking of Indian culture, one is in fact referring to language, religion, rituals, food, dance, customs, values and traditions that are specifically and uniquely Indian. Indeed, participants in this study viewed practices such as the sharing of food, religion or religious practices, family name and values, popular culture

(Bollywood), sport, language and travels back to India as a means to characterise what being Indian meant to them. This reinforces the notion that for New Zealand born participants, Indian identity was also culturally driven. As noted by Miles and Small (1999), ethnicity refers to specific social and cultural attributes and the boundary between two or more self-identifying collectives which claim an historical existence (Miles & Small, 1999). For participants in this study those boundaries were usually described as being 'racially' or ancestrally driven. These elements are further discussed below.

Supporting the findings of Fuchs, Linkenbach and Malik's (2010) study which suggests Indian families usually prepare and eat Indian food so children have no choice other than to grow up with it, findings of this study show that food was considered by participants to be a huge part of Indian culture. From birth, participants were raised to eat curries and follow practices such as handling food with their right hand and eating with their fingers as opposed to 'Kiwi' practices of eating with a knife and fork. Such practices are socially learned expected ways of behaving (Charon, 2010) shaped and reinforced ways in which participants identified as 'being Indian'.

Furthermore, participants reflected on negotiating eating habits in front of friends and family, where with friends, it was considered appropriate to eat with a knife and fork (practising what some considered 'Kiwi' practices), yet in front of family, the practice of eating food with their fingers was always expected of them. Although participants often viewed this as an identifier or characteristic of 'being Indian', conflicts were sometimes experienced in

travelling back to India, where some families would sit on the floor and eat from their plates using their fingers, whilst other families in India would, like many Kiwi families, sit at a dinner table and eat with a knife and fork. This further demonstrated the problematic and sometimes confusing way particular cultural practices are negotiated and renegotiated in different contexts (Nagel, 1994; Barth, 1969).

Participants also highlighted the importance of food as a key characteristic of being, what Williams (2010) defined, as 'uniquely Indian' in the way that it was shared with guests entering the home. The findings from this study further illustrate the differentiation process used by individuals to separate them from others (Zelinsky & Lee, 1998) in the way that food was offered to guests, compared to that of their Kiwi or European peers. Food in an Indian home was always deemed to be homemade and of Indian authenticity, whether it was a curry, Indian snack, savoury or sweets, a practice which participants believed was not shared among New Zealand European families or homes, where the meal or food offered was not considered culturally unique.

Many studies have also drawn attention to the centrality of family as an important characteristic of being Indian (Williams, 2010), and its influence on one's identification of Indian-ness (Gilbertson, 2007). The family is also a critical dimension of community formation and belonging (Castles & Davidson, 2000). Participants in this study experienced Indian culture as one that is very family oriented, where, as Williams (2010) suggests, parents

sacrifice a great deal for their children, teaching them that they have a reciprocal obligation to respect their elders and those who provide for them. The participants of this study also emphasised that if an elder in their family was to fall ill, be it a grandparent or parents themselves, they had a moral obligation as Indians to look after this family member as opposed to putting them in a rest home.

Where symbolic interactionist approaches suggest expected ways of behaving are learnt through the process of socialisation (Charon, 2010) and identities are often shaped through social interactions (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) and/or performance (Goffman, 1950), participants in this study often felt pressure to conform to what they perceived as expected ways of behaving. For some participants, this was done as a means to manage the impression others had not only of themselves as individuals, but also of the shared identity derived from what they labelled 'family name'. Family name for these particular participants was deemed highly important as it provided a sense of uniqueness in identities with other Indian families. Family name was also seen as being passed on from generation to generation, where linkages with generations before them created historical ties to bloodline, connecting people to their ancestral roots in India. Participants believed an understanding of the family identity through such linkages and personal biographies of members within this institution of family helped shape, not only their own identity and understanding of their place within the Indian community, but also the way in which others could identify them, both in New Zealand and India. Participants also feared mismanaging the impressions

others had of them as they believed their actions would not only affect them, but also their siblings, where a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1950), through non conformity would create 'shame' for the family as a whole.

Furthermore, Gilbertson's (2007; 2010) findings suggest a person's 'un-Indian' behaviour risked not only the family's reputation, but the marriage prospects of family members. This was also illustrated in the findings of this study where family name was deemed important in mate selection for participants, as the first question parents often ask when introduced to a significant other, is parent's names, which in turn plays an important factor for their acceptance by the family. However, findings of this study also suggest that for some participants, the importance of family name is losing value among the newer generation of Indians born in New Zealand. Those who strongly believe in its importance felt this was a huge loss for ethnic identity and understanding.

Religion was believed by participants to be another strong characteristic of 'being Indian'. Everyday practices of certain aspects of religion were seen to have been taken for granted. For example, participants shared reflections about having to think about food consumption (ensuring they did not eat beef or meat on certain days). Part of their Indian identity was shaped through expected rules and behavioural practices, such as not turning their back to statues of Gods. Some participants reflected on an integration process of such practices and behaviours in everyday social interactions with other people, where they created an 'imagined reality' of expected ways of

behaving. An example of this was in their 'created understanding' that not being allowed to turn their back towards statues of the Gods also meant not to turn their backs on other individuals, as this was considered to be rude and disrespectful and ultimately, 'un-Indian'.

Religion was also seen as a key aspect that created conflict and confusion in identification, where participants were born into a religion (Hinduism) and were taught to partake in certain practices since birth. Through the use of religion, identity for participants was again seen, as Fenton (2003) and Geertz (1973) suggest, as being ascribed. Religious practices were usually enforced by parents and often unexplained leaving some participants confused and often rejecting or separating themselves from other Indians (usually an older generation such as parents, aunties, uncles and grandparents), which later changed to self-taught practices as a means to manage and re-accept cultural traditions from a religious perspective. Findings of this study demonstrated participants' feelings of resentment, not only due to confusion and disconnectedness of certain rituals and practices, but also a sense of forced belonging to identify as they could not completely separate themselves from being Indian having been born into the Hindu religion.

This experience and identification process connecting participants to Indian-ness was again similar to findings in a study by Gilbertson (2007) on Gujarati Indians in Wellington where she discusses how although individuals could chose not to identify as Indian, they could not 'opt out' of Indian-ness due to

restrictions that would always be experienced based on racial classification, blood ties, upbringing and also connectedness with the Indian community – all things that could never be escaped. In a similar way, being born Hindu for all participants in this study was a way to connect to their Indian-ness, as being born Hindu meant they were Indian as only those born Hindu could practice as Hindus (meaning one cannot convert to Hinduism, one must be born Hindu). This became problematic for one participant in particular who self-identified as ‘Kiwi’. Religious beliefs confused her knowing she could not separate herself from her Indian bloodline due to having been born Hindu. This particular finding supports that of Raza (2007) who found that identification with a group does not always correspond to emotional involvement or sense of belonging to that group.

From a social context perspective, participants felt it was easier to accept certain cultural and religious practices such as vegetarianism when they were around friends and family. However, conflict was experienced in work environments where one particular participant felt she had to negotiate and reject her religious practice of vegetarianism as a means to feel accepted and follow what was deemed a conflicting but more dominant system of belief and practice (eating meat or food that had contained meat). Once again, reflecting on perceived expectations of behaviour (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934), the way in which this conflict was ‘managed’ or ‘mismanaged’ from the participant’s experiences was by picking meat out of foods such as salads and sandwiches at conferences as a means to be polite and

respectful towards her bosses and clients. This finding further illustrates what Williams (2010) described as living in two worlds where there is often a mismatch or conflict experienced in balancing between the 'two worlds' in which one lives. In this instance, for the participant in this study the mismatch was between her Indian religious beliefs and practices and those of what she believed to be a 'Kiwi' or New Zealand norm or practice of behaviour and values and expectation.

Where Nayar's (2009) study looked at immigrant women engaging in occupations where they sought to 'create a place' with which they could work with 'Indian ways' as well as 'New Zealand ways', this study found participants created a similar perceived sense of Indian-ness and Kiwi-ness in work ethic having come from experiences within the family dairy or fruit shop. As Williams (2010) suggests, children of Indian families were required to work in the family shop without pay. For participants in this study this experience created a sense of connectedness with family, values and work ethic which they associated with 'being Indian' through the 'family oriented' expectations of helping 'in the shop'. Participants believed it was through the family business that an aspect of identity was formed where parents would instil a hard working ethic.

Identity studies on identity formation of Indian-Americans, which looked at youth culture in the context of the second generation club scene (Maira, 1999; Maira, 2002; Murthy, 2007) where traditional folk music is remixed over Western dance club rhythms including house, techno and hip-hop

(Diethrich, 1999/2000; Maira 1999; Durha, 2004; Murthy 2007) identified a negotiation process between what Maira (2002) termed 'cultural nostalgia' and coolness' during the identity formation process experienced by second-generation Indian-American youths. These studies suggest a negotiation process occurred between identifying with dominant groups, for example, Blacks in America and the American white population (Maira, 2002). Similarly in this study, a negotiation process occurred with participants where they would manage ethnic identities through accepting and rejecting popular culture, such as Bollywood movies and actors. Some would use actors as a means to create and accept an aspect of Indian-ness with the use of humour. This, in a sense, is reflective of Goffman's (1950) notion of 'performance' to manage impressions of the 'self'. Participants shared experiences of using Bollywood actors' names on props such as a Foodtown card as a means to embrace a sense of 'Indian-ness' with peers and strangers through social interaction, and as a means to symbolically state or express an Indian identity. Whereas other participants would manage the impression others had of them by accepting or rejecting an interest in Bollywood movies around different social groups – one being their parents, where they felt safer to accept, the other around their non-Indian friends where they felt the need to reject in an attempt to feel accepted.

Findings of this study also suggest that cricket was used by participants as a partial identifier, as it provided a space or means to build a bond and sense of connection with their fathers, which in turn linked their fathers back to India, providing them too with a sense of connectedness. The depiction of

cricket being an 'Indian' sport (Madan, 2000; Bhattacharya, 2006) in this sense was used by participants as a means to create a contact zone (Johnson, 2007) where aspects of ethnic identity and belonging could be created and displayed.

Findings showed that the way in which participants expressed and practiced language, or lack of it, was through the use of humour with their peers. As previously mentioned, ethnic identity, for Nagel (1994), is fluid and constantly created, recreated and transformed in modern societies. This is reflected in the negotiation process of language and gestures used by participants' parents and other generations of Indians, including accents and hand and head gestures being used as a means to manage the conflicts faced in stereotyping from non-Indian groups, and also the conflict of not knowing how to speak the language fluently. Thereby, belonging was recreated with the use of their own language, developed from broken and 'mock' Gujarati, which could be shared, practiced and learned within a collective group of their own. Use of language in this instance is also illustrative of Goffman's (1950) notion of performance and impression management.

Furthermore, findings of this study demonstrated a positive experience felt by participants in their travel back to India, where they discussed feelings of a stronger sense of connectedness to their Indian roots, where language was quickly relearned and a sense of belonging was re-established. All participants in this study had positive experiences of India and expressed their willingness to travel back. These findings differed from that of Fuchs,

Linkenbach and Malik's (2010) study of New Zealand born Indians in Christchurch, whose findings suggested that their participants shared negative experiences of their travel back to India. Such experiences were with the food, the climate and a sense of being bored. Although participants shared different experiences in both studies, participants in both studies appear to have shared similar beliefs on connectedness. In Fuchs, Linkenbach and Malik's (2010) study, connectedness to India for participants did not necessarily mean to the 'homeland' of individual participants themselves, as often suggested in diaspora studies, but more so in terms of one's personal history in the wider context of family, village, region and religion. This view was similar to participants in this study, as those who had travelled to India expressed a feeling of connectedness and a desire to travel back to the village and region from which their parents had come. Findings for this particular study show that a greater understanding was gained for participants on the views and beliefs shared by their parents and grandparents after their journey back to India, in experiencing where they had come from.

Findings from this study also found that participants travelling to India were seen as foreigners, which impacted on their experiences in India and in turn how they viewed themselves, ethnically. Where Fuchs, Linkenbach and Malik's (2010) participants felt a sense of boredom and restrictedness in being able to do what they wanted, participants in this study felt that being viewed as foreigners made them feel like foreigners, which had them re-negotiating their ethnic identity to being more nationally based, embracing

more of their 'Kiwi' identity. Participants from this study also shared experiences of involvement with Indian children in India as a means to attempt to fit in, connect and blend with Indians there, once again managing and renegotiating to create a sense of ethnic belonging.

### **5.3 Characteristics of “Being Kiwi”**

Mirroring Gilbertson's (2007) findings, 'being Kiwi' for participants simply meant being born here; it was their national identity. Others associated 'Kiwi-ness' with behaviours and hobbies such as going out, socialising with friends and being free to do as they pleased. This often conflicted with their Indian-ness in terms of abiding by their parent's wishes by being home to help with family chores after work or school. Perceived or defined characteristics of 'being Kiwi', for participants in this study, were also used to justify or differentiate them from their parents' or grandparents' "traditional" views or values and to justify conflicts in perceived expectations of behaviour or difference, as further discussed below.

### **5.4 Cultural Norms (Indian and New Zealand)**

The interview data suggests that, for participants in this study, there was a change in norms which came from their New Zealand or 'Kiwi' upbringing enabling them to question certain practices and beliefs compared to that of their parents, who were always taught not to 'answer back', as such behaviour for their parents was taught to be disrespectful and rude towards their elders and in turn deemed 'less Indian'. Participants, however, did not

see themselves as less Indian, instead they viewed this behaviour as demonstrative of their willingness to learn more of the 'Indian culture' as opposed to participating and repeating practices their parents did because their grandparents did as did their great grandparents before them and so on.

Also, for participants who experienced conflict in terms of values and beliefs either culturally or religiously, instead of rejecting attributes of 'being Indian' they would renegotiate an understanding and create a sense of difference by using their 'Kiwi' values or knowledge gained from a New Zealand upbringing, such as school, and analytical and critical thinking skills gained from university, to interpret practices or beliefs in religious scriptures or re-evaluate beliefs taught to them by parents. This was also used to separate themselves from Indians (particularly those in India) who did not share or held conflicting beliefs, demonstrating what Karner (2007) suggests as ethnicity intersecting in important ways with cultural and religious phenomena and Williams (2010) notion of 'two worlds', where participants attempt to mediate a balance between practices, values and beliefs of their two identities.

## **5.5 Differentiating the New Zealand born with the India born**

Differentiating themselves from Indians born in India, participants used artefacts such as clothing and jewellery to separate themselves from Indians from India, partaking in a role reversal, where, instead of fitting in with other Indians in New Zealand, participants would separate themselves, treating or

seeing an Indian born population as ‘foreigners’ into what they arguably now viewed as ‘their homeland’ (compared with attempts to fit in with Indians in India upon their own travels to India and longing for acceptance they now behaved in the opposite manner).

Research on identity reports conflicts arise between the different cultural identities one identifies with, in comparison with the dominant majority culture in which they live. Such studies look at negotiating identities of diasporic groups or immigrant groups with gender roles as a basis for analysis (Barker, 1997; Durham, 2004).

Surprisingly, findings in this study found gender role difference played a part in identity confusion, where New Zealand born participants believed in what they considered ‘traditional’ gender roles taught by parents to be a norm within the home. Having been taught differences in roles and responsibilities with household chores and labour between males and females, participants experienced confusion when marrying their India born Indian spouses who were raised with what participants called “more Western values”. Participants had been raised to understand the female role of being domesticated, taking care of household chores such as cooking – which included the grinding of spices derived from a family recipe, and nurturing, and the male role was more to do with aspects of gardening and house repairs, whereas their spouses, who were born in India, were not raised in such a manner. Instead, they were used to having help from paid servants. Participants believed it was a difference in changing societies and possibly a

difference in generation, with parents starting to adapt more and integrate with the newer generation after them. However, this too was confusing as the gap between generations was questioned.

Participants also believed their parents may have felt pressure to raise children with 'traditional' Indian norms from their ancestral homeland. Leckie (2007) discusses in her book on Indian Settlers, the experiences of women immigrants having to find and locate spices and 'traditional' ingredients for curries upon arrival in New Zealand. Taking this study's participants' experiences and views into account, arguably, perhaps these experiences of having to source spices became a tradition that was passed down within the family to newer generations of Indians.

## **5.6 Geographical differences in Indian-ness**

Not only did participants differentiate themselves from Indians born in India, both in India and living in New Zealand, they also differentiated themselves from other New Zealand born Indians living in New Zealand. These were generally geographical differences, where those from smaller cities such as Rotorua and Wellington, differentiated themselves from New Zealand born Indians living in Auckland. Findings from this study suggest that those from Wellington and Rotorua believed Indians in Auckland to be less Indian compared to themselves, who were more involved and more knowledgeable in certain religious and festive practices. Also, these participants felt more collective and held closer more honest relationships with their parents.

## **5.7 Involvement in Indian Community**

Participants felt involvement in or attendance at certain religious and festive events to be considered actual involvement, although they did believe they were more involved when they were younger, as parents would force them. This supports the findings of Johnson's (2007) research which examined the perspective of the Indian diaspora context looking at the way in which identity can be shaped or constructed through performance in festivals such as Diwali. Participants in this study shared experiences of having been more involved in such festivals while attending Gujarati School.

Involvement in the Indian Association was once again largely dependent on their parents' involvement. Findings of this study again demonstrated differences geographically in participant's involvement, where those from Wellington and Rotorua were more heavily involved in the Association and those in Auckland were not. Issues of involvement in the Indian Association for these different locations also differed in terms of succession and involvement of the younger/newer generation. Auckland participants had a much more negative view of the Auckland Indian Association, believing it to be more commercially and politically driven, as opposed to culturally, compared with Wellington and Rotorua participants who held positive views towards the associations and were more actively involved.

Views and experiences in Gujarati school also differed in terms of experiences between Auckland and Rotorua. For Rotorua participants, attendance was a means to create a social site to share culture, whereas for

Auckland participants, their experiences of Gujarati school were once again very negative where participants felt teachers were mean and abusive. These differences in experiences could be due to a difference in the number of Indians attending, as Leckie (2007) reports in her book, Gujarati school numbers in Rotorua, Wellington and Pukekohe were relatively small.

### **5.8 Cool to be Indian: “I wouldn’t want to be anything else”**

When reflecting on how they saw themselves ethnically, participants shared a common view on aspects of culture they carried with them every day but were often taken for granted. These aspects were similar to Williams (2010) notion of ‘uniquely Indian’ aspects of culture, and although often envisioned as an ‘ascribed’ ethnic identity, participants also used such aspects to shape and reshape notions of their own ethnic identity through social interaction with others, which ultimately separated them from other New Zealanders making them ‘uniquely Indian’ through a culture that could only be experienced by ‘being Indian’.

## Chapter Six: Conclusions

### 6.0 Conclusion:

By employing a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews the purpose of this study has been to explore the experiences of New Zealand Indians in managing, accepting, rejecting and negotiating their national identity in their everyday lives. This chapter includes the strengths and significance of the study, limitations of the study and future directions.

Findings and analysis from this study illustrate the sometimes problematic and conflicting ways in which identifying boundaries for contemporary Indian identities are shaped and reshaped for the participants of this study. Key themes that emerged from the data which illustrate this point are evident in:

- the way in which participants identified ethnically;
- determinants used to characterise themselves as 'being Indian';
- determinants used to characterise themselves as 'being Kiwi' and its implications on perceived cultural norms of an Indian and/or New Zealand identity; and also
- the ways in which participants differentiated themselves either from New Zealanders in general, other New Zealand born Indians or Indians living in New Zealand who were born or raised in India.

## **6.1 Strengths and Significance**

One of the major strengths of this study is that it has been conducted by a New Zealand born Indian. The researcher of this study is part of the Gujarati community of which participants used in this study are also members. Most literature conducted on New Zealand Indians is conducted either by non-Indians or on groups from a region in India that is different from the researcher themselves.

The significance of findings from this study is that statistical data from the 2006 Census is affirmed, which demonstrates that a majority of Indians born in New Zealand still continue to strongly identify with their ancestral country of origin – India. Through an exploration of the experiences and beliefs of the 13 participants interviewed in this study, findings also confirm major ideas of sociological literature on the concept of ‘identity’, where participants’ conceptions of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ cannot exist without social groups, institutions (Gans, 1979; Stryker, 1980), social relationships, structures and social interactions of which we are inevitably a part and in which we participate (Brewer, 2001).

More specifically conceptions of ‘self’ and identity for those interviewed in this study are shaped largely by family and their involvement within the Indian community, participants’ interactions with peers and groups and institutions within New Zealand, such as work, and experiences on travels back to India. Conceptions of an Indian ethnic identity for participants in this

study are also given collective meaning in practices associated with food, religion and language.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Study and Future Direction**

However, there are a number of limitations to this study. The following section offers some of these limitations as well as recommendations for future direction.

The first limitation of this study is that concerning sample size. Although the sample size is appropriate for this exploratory study, and provided an opportunity to gain an in-depth insight into the lived experiences of the sample of New Zealand Indians used in this study, it does not allow for generalisations to be made of the larger or overall New Zealand population of Indians born in New Zealand. The themes and findings of this study may serve as a starting point to raise further questions about the ways in which New Zealand Indians manage their ethnic identity and participation within the Indian Community. Furthermore, future studies could explore ways in which a New Zealand Indian identity is perceived or ascribed by participants' non-Indian Kiwi peers or society and the effects of this on their own identifying processes. Educational qualification and professional status of participants could also be used in future research to explore the interactions and experiences faced by participants in shaping their ethnic identities.

Another limitation concerning sample size of this study is that it was conducted on small scale sample of New Zealand Indians living in the North Island region (Auckland, Wellington and Rotorua). However, because this study used qualitative semi-structured interviews to gather data, the sample used in this study was enough to provide in-depth information for the purpose of the study. It is however recommended that future research could usefully compare and contrast Indians living in other regions of New Zealand, including the South Island.

All participants in this study were of Gujarati descent and all practiced Hindu beliefs. Not all Indians in New Zealand are of Gujarati descent and not all Indians in New Zealand practice Hinduism. Future studies should compare the experiences of Indians not only from different states in India or those practising different religions, but also those from areas outside of India, for example, Fijian Indians, South African Indians and so on. Family name and broader identities of jati and caste could also be further explored and its implications or influences on one's identity.

Findings from this study demonstrate differences in feelings, attitudes and participation of the sampled New Zealand born Indian population in this study towards the Indian Association in their regions. One of the key issues raised was the issue of integration and succession for the new generation of Indians replacing the older generation committee members. Future studies should not only look towards examining participation of members of the Indian

community, both adults, children and the middle aged generation, but also compare how each of the Associations are set up and run and whether improvements or integration could be made.

In addition to exploring New Zealand Indian involvement in the Indian Community and Association, future studies could explore the feelings, attitudes and beliefs of a younger generation of Indians born in New Zealand. The youngest participant in this study was 19 years old. Future studies could compare a younger generation below the age of 18 with that of a middle age population of second generation Indians and again with an older or aging population of New Zealand born Indians, in order to capture further glimpses of how ethnic boundaries may be shaped and reshaped or negotiated with a changing society.

Overall, findings from this study adds to scholarly information/literature on the current generation of Indians both living and born in New Zealand. Such findings include the importance of family, practices associated with food, the use of language and the importance of travel in both managing and creating and shaping a collective identity for New Zealand born Gujarati Indians. Furthermore, findings from this study identify a concern of community involvement in the Indian Association and running of activities such as Gujarati School, in learning and preservation of culture and language for a newer generation of Indians born in New Zealand.

However, as Barth (1969) suggests, identity and culture should not be viewed as prior, fixed aspects of ethnic organisation but as problematic, constantly changing and negotiated features of ethnicity. Furthermore, Nagel (1994) argues, ethnicity is best understood as a “dynamic constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organisation” (p.52). This thesis involves an intellectual journey and should be viewed as an ongoing process that needs to be continually explored. This is a point further illustrated by Fenton (1999), who suggests “...we should understand ethnicity as a social process, as moving boundaries and identities which people collectively and individually draw around themselves in their social lives” (p. 10).

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## Appendix 1 Ethics Approval



### MEMORANDUM

#### Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Gabriele Schaefer  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 2 November 2009  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 09/210 **Experiences in Managing, challenging and identifying with Indian-New Zealand identities.**

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Dear Gabriele

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 14 September 2009 and that on 30 October 2009, the Chair of AUTEC approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 14 December 2009.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 30 October 2012.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 30 October 2012;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 30 October 2012 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

Madeline Banda  
Executive Secretary  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee Cc: Malti Vallabh [malti.vallabh@aut.ac.nz](mailto:malti.vallabh@aut.ac.nz)

## Appendix 2 Information Sheet

# Participant Information Sheet



### Date Information Sheet Produced:

27 July 2009

### Project Title

Experiences in Managing, Challenging and Identifying with Indian-New Zealand Identities.

### An Invitation

My name is Malti Vallabh and I am completing my Masters of Philosophy degree at the AUT University. I am inviting you to participate in this study towards my thesis. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study without having to provide a reason. You will not be disadvantaged in any way should you choose to withdraw.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The 2006 Census shows the Asian ethnic group, totalling 354,552 people, was New Zealand's fourth largest major ethnic group after European, Maori and Other Ethnicity. Of this group 104,583 people identified as Indian (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). This was an increase of 68.2% in 5 years, where the 2001 Census reported 62,190 Indians living in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2008).

These statistics suggest that although a significant number of Indians are born in New Zealand, they still identify with their ancestral countries of origin. Yet the specific nature of how New Zealand born and raised Indians actually perform and practice their ethnicity is fluid, dynamic and malleable. The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the problematic and complex ways in which this identity is negotiated on a daily basis and to explore the conceptions of ethnic and national identity of New Zealand born Indians.

### How was I chosen for this invitation?

You have been chosen for this study because you were born in New Zealand and have Indian ancestry.

### What will happen in this research?

If you are selected to participate in the interview for this study, you will be given the opportunity to discuss your experiences, feelings and beliefs on Indian-New Zealand identity. This interview will only take 30-45 minutes. I will ask some very broad

questions to help you get started. Participation is voluntary. This interview will be audio-taped and you may have your responses withdrawn any time before the completion of data collection.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Because this study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the problematic and complex ways in which identity is negotiated on a daily basis, feelings and experiences will be discussed. The disclosure of such information may recall memories which cause emotional discomfort.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you feel any discomfort during the interview you may refuse to answer questions. You will also be able to have responses withdrawn whenever you like prior to the completion of data collection.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

All information you provide in the interview will be completely confidential, and your name will not be used in this study. Your identity will not be disclosed. Privacy and confidentiality will be respected.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There is no cost to you for participating in this study, other than your time. Interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes of your time.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you wish to participate in this study, please contact me by email, [malti.vallabh@aut.ac.nz](mailto:malti.vallabh@aut.ac.nz), or phone, 921 9999 extn 8496. Prior to being interviewed, you will be required to complete a Consent Form. This will be provided before the interview.

### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

This study will be made available upon completion in the AUT University library.

### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Gabriele Schaefer, [Gabriele.Schaefer@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Gabriele.Schaefer@aut.ac.nz), ph. 921 9999 extn 8410

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 8044.

### **Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

#### **Researcher Contact Details:**

For further information regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email: [malti.vallabh@aut.ac.nz](mailto:malti.vallabh@aut.ac.nz), or alternatively phone, 921 9999 extn 8496

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Project Supervisor, Dr Gabriele Schaefer, [Gabriele.Schaefer@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Gabriele.Schaefer@aut.ac.nz), ph. 921 9999  
extn 8410

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 2 November 2009, AUTEK Reference number  
09/210.**

## Appendix 3 Consent Form

# Consent Form



*Project title:* **Experiences in Managing, Challenging and Identifying with Indian-New Zealand Identities**

*Project Supervisor:* **Dr Gabriele Schaefer**

*Researcher:* **Malti Vallabh**

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 27 July 2009.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):  
Yes  No

Participant's signature:.....

Participant's name:.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 2 November 2009 AUTEK Reference number 09/210**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## **Appendix 4 Indicative Questions**

### **Indicative Questions:**

**The following questions may vary during each interview depending on the respondents' responses and are intended to be used as a guide to generate in depth discussion from the respondent.**

What ethnic group do you belong to?

What does being Indian mean to you?

What does being 'Kiwi' mean to you?

What does being NZ born Indian mean to you?

Do you experience conflicts between the two identities/ethnicities?

How involved are you within the Indian community?

What do you tick in the ethnicity section of the Census form?

Is it 'cool' to be Indian?