

Recreating “Mini-India” in a Foreign Land: Experiences of Asian Indian Mothers

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Abstract

Guided by grounded theory, this qualitative study focused on Asian Indian immigrant women’s experiences in maintaining and promoting the Indian cultural values for themselves and their children. Participants’ esteem for recreating “mini India” was captured in the following two themes: (a) preference for Indian Enclaves and Indian community resources and, (b) adding Indian touches to their American homes.

Participants

- ❑ **Thirteen** 1st-generation Asian Indian immigrant women, living in NJ
- ❑ Age range 33 to 41 (M= 36.38).
- ❑ Years spent in the U.S. ranged: 3 to 22 (M= 12.07).

Data Collection

Between **May 2016 to November 2017**; using in-dept semi-structured interviews



Findings

Theme 1: Preference for Indian Enclaves & Community Resources

This theme captures participants’ preference for Indian neighborhoods and Indian community resources

- Participants strongly preferred *Availability of Indian-specific Services & Amenities* in/or around their neighborhoods. It is important to understand that these **amenities were imperative for keeping specific aspects of their “Indianness” alive** in a foreign land

“it gives us satisfaction that though away [from India], we at least eat authentic [Indian] food and celebrate [festivals] in same manner as our family is doing [in India]. It make[s] you feel closer to the home and family”.
--**Shaina**

“they [Indian stores] have pretty Ganesh murtis [Idols of God]. We find A to Z accessories and materials for ‘aarti’ [ritual]. We are able to celebrate the festivals with full rituals, just like in India”
--**Veena**

- Indian Community Centers became important *Sites for Socialization Opportunities & Events* with other Asian Indian Diasporic members. According to the participants, these participations were **important medium of familiarizing their children** to the tenets of Indian culture.

“they [children] would not be ashamed of wearing Indian traditional clothes or jewelry and all because the ambience supported it. They would not be the only ones wearing them. Other children would be dressed up accordingly too. They learn that “we are alike”
--**Seema**



Theme 2: Adding Indian Touches to their American Homes

Most participants’ homes had some form of traditional Indian touch to them. Traditional possessions and artifacts from India were arranged as a part of the main-living space, such that it is easily visible to all. In a way, these possessions played a key role in anchoring the Indian identity of these immigrants on a foreign land.

Implications

- ❑ These findings are beneficial for researchers and academicians who are interested in exploring: the culture-parenting nexus, the immigration-acculturation linkages, cross-cultural psychology and comparative family studies



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