

Introduction

The formation of an identity is a process of both construction and contestation. Community identities are articulated and established in the contested terrain of multiple interests, issues, strategies and actors. This paper is the beginning of a study of the process of identity formation for Indians in the U.S. As a part of the post-1965 immigrant community, Indians in the U.S. are currently engaged in a process of both being identified and self-identifying; of constructing and contesting an identity. The struggle over identity centers around two designations: Indian American and South Asian. Where I expected to find a uni-linear if uneven path towards a single identity designation, I found instead, fissures and factions within the community with conflicting interests and strategies. In different arenas within the Indian community, different identities are being forged.

This paper is an initial exploration of this contested terrain, and an examination of the literature as it relates to identity formation. I start out by identifying the key issues in the forging of an identity among Indians in the U.S., from there I examine the literature on race and ethnicity as it relates to this case, and finally discuss a hypothesis to frame the design of a future research project to more adequately address the questions raised in this paper. I begin with a brief history and profile of Indians in the U.S., look at some of the evidence of the conflict between the Indian American and South Asian identities, determine some of the sites of contestation, and then apply the literature to this case to establish what questions it is not able to answer.

Brief History and Profile of Indians in the U.S.

The history of Indians in the U.S. can be roughly divided into three periods: 1900-1946, 1946-1965, and post-1965. Between 1900-1946 about 5,000 - 6,400 Indians immigrated to the U.S., mostly to the West Coast. They were mostly Sikh men who came from the region of Punjab to work in the areas of lumbering and railroad work. However, they settled in the Imperial and Sacramento Valleys and quickly moved into agriculture, first as laborers and then as farmers and tenants. They came as 'sojourners' leaving families and marriages behind to make money and someday return home to buy land (Kitano and Daniels, 1988: 90). However, by World War II they were becoming a disappearing minority. By 1946 their numbers had dwindled to a mere 1500 (Takaki, 1989: 445).

The second wave of immigration began in 1946. The India League of America successfully lobbied for the passage through Congress of the Act of July 2, 1946 which gave naturalization rights and set a small immigration quota for "persons of races indigenous to India". In the following seventeen years, 7,000 Indians immigrated to the U.S., 85% coming as relatives of the Sikh and Punjabi men who became citizens (Kitano and Daniels, 1988: 96-97). Like the first wave of immigrants they were mostly employed in agriculture and had very little education (Takaki, 1989: 314).

The most recent wave of Indian immigration began with the 1965 Immigration Act. In 1965 alone, 10,000 Indians immigrated to the U.S., and as of 1990, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 815,447 Indians in the U.S. Between 1980 and 1990, the community grew by 125.6%, second only to the growth in the Vietnamese population.

Unlike their predecessors, however, these immigrants from India came as highly educated professionals from urban areas; even numbers of men and women came, and they settled all over the country, not only on the West Coast (Kitano and Daniels, 1988: 98). The majority of these immigrants are college educated, with around 45% of them working as managers, professionals, and executives (Kitano and Daniels, 1988: 99). While many Indians in this third wave came initially as sojourners for economic reasons, they have ended up as settlers, with a majority becoming American citizens and bringing the rest of their families over (Takaki, 1989: 445).

A Question of Identity

Since becoming a settler community in the U.S., "Asian-Indian Americans have been trying to define who they are in their adopted country" (Takaki, 1989: 446). The issue of identity was first brought into focus in 1975 when the Office of Federal Contract Compliance decided to categorize Indians "as white". This provoked much discussion and debate within the community: to claim minority status or not as a discriminated group. While the India League of America argued against claiming minority status (Takaki, 1988: 446), the Association of Indians in America (AIA) lobbied to have Asian India reclassified as Asian American and claim minority status. The India League felt that claiming minority status would put Indians in a difficult position: "If employers find it possible to fill some kind of minority 'quota' by reporting high-level Indo-American employees, while continuing to discriminate against the truly disadvantaged minorities, we may find many Americans turning against us" (Takaki, 1988: 446). However, AIA leaders "believed that government recognition of Asian Indians as a minority group would somehow confer affirmative action benefits on group members" (Espiritu, 1992: 125). After a three year campaign, AIA was successful in getting Asian Indians classified as Asian Pacific Americans in the 1980 Census.

Today, however, the question of identity is somewhat different. The conflict is not over whether Indians in the U.S. should claim minority status, but over what we should call ourselves: Indian American or South Asian. Growing up in the Midwest between 1979-89, I thought of myself as an Indian American. My parents were part of the 1965 cohort that immigrated. They and all their Indian friends were active in the Association of Indians in America and thought of themselves as Indians in America. For those of us in the second generation or the 1.5 generation, however conflicted we felt, we were aware of our identity as Indians, but also as Americans. We considered ourselves Indian Americans or Indo-Americans.

In 1989 I became aware of the term South Asian to describe Indians in America. I picked up the book, *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian American Women* edited by Asian Women United of California. In the Preface they write, "Most of the ethnic groups we write about are familiar -- Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean Americans. Others, however, may need some explanation. By South Asian women, we mean those whose roots extend to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries in that area" (Asian Women United

of California, 1989: ix). In 1993, the Women of South Asian Descent Collective published the anthology, *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*. This was the first collection of writings by South Asian women and was widely read and well received. In the Forward and Introduction they write, "This anthology comes at a critical point in South Asian American history" and the Collective wanted to "fully represent the South Asian community through these writings" (The Women of South Asian Descent Collective, 1993: vii and xvi).

By 1993, it seemed clear to me that South Asian was the new designation for Indian Americans. I welcomed the new term because it implied a larger community with a more politicized understanding of our location in U.S. society. It implied solidarity and connection not only to other Indians, but also to Pakistanis, Bangladeshi, Fijian Indians and blacks in England. I was no longer isolated in America, I too had a complex, heterogeneous community to belong to. The writings in both collections touched on the issues of race, class, gender, activism, discrimination, and oppression -- issues I struggled with growing up in the U.S. Now I could imagine for myself a larger community that shared my struggles, and where I could find a sense of belonging.

Contested terrain

In 1994 I moved to California expecting to find a politicized and active South Asian community, and found instead a community divided. For all the evidence I found of a South Asian community, there was equal evidence for a thriving Indian American or Indo-American community. In October of 1995 at the University of California-Berkeley campus a student group called the South Asian Students Alliance organized a variety of activities to celebrate South Asian Awareness Week. Activities included movies, lectures and noontime performances held at the campus' center, Sproul Plaza. Students performed ras, garba (Indian dances from the state of Gujarat) and bhangra (an Indian dance from the state of Punjab) along with an extended dance sequence to two Hindi film songs. After the garba and bhangra performances, people from the audience were invited to participate by dancing in the plaza. About 200 students, mostly South Asian, formed lines to dance garba and groups to dance bhangra. In all of the announcements about the events, students were asked to wear "South Asian clothing" during the week. Many male and female students complied with this request and were dressed in some of their finest South Asian clothing.

Yet, just one month earlier, the Center for South Asia Studies announced a newly endowed chair, the Indo-American Community Chair. The chair, created out of contributions by the "Indian American community to increase the visibility and understanding of Indo-American issues in academia", is the first of its kind. Even though the Indian American community was working with the Center for South Asian Studies, they were very particular to name the chair the Indo-American Community Chair and not the South Asian chair. During that same time two Indian women were awarded the Women of Achievement Awards in San Jose in recognition of their demonstrated excellence through individual accomplishments and proven leadership. The Indian Business and Professional Women (IBPW) were actively involved in nominating six Indian women. This was the first time in 15 years that Indian names were on the nominee list.

Even in the popular print and electronic media there is evidence of the fissure within the community. *India Currents*, a 140 page monthly magazine that serves 96,000 readers in the Bay Area, recently started to advertise itself as the "complete Indian American magazine." Meanwhile, *Hum* magazine is gaining more visibility and popularity. *Hum* advertises itself as a publication written by "intelligent South Asian American twentysomethings who have embraced the best of two cultures." On the Wide World Web there are a variety of South Asian and Indian American home pages, including one called *South Asian Voices* and one called *Indolink* that describes itself as "a global electronic publication covering Indian community and businesses worldwide."

So, what is the difference between using the term Indian American and South Asian? And who are the people using the different labels? What do the terms themselves mean?

While it is clear that Indian American or Indo-American refers to people of Indian descent in the U.S., what does South Asian refer to? Within the last 25 years the term South Asian has become popular in academic and literary circles. As described earlier in *Making Waves*, South Asian refers to people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives. It also refers to people from the South Asian diaspora, so it includes Indians from Fiji, Uganda, Guyana, etc. However, it is not a designation that people from the geographic area of South Asia use to describe themselves, but a term used in the United States and England to describe the immigrant communities from this region.

Even the term South Asian itself is contested. In the United States, many people use South Asian interchangeably with Indian because Indians make up the largest number of South Asian immigrants. This has left many of the other South Asian groups feeling marginalized and invisible. The assumption is "that everyone placed in (this category) has equal space and voice within and between them. But a new hierarchy has emerged in which certain (Indian) voices have been privileged and have developed their own hegemonic power" (Islam, 1993: 242). Often the Indian community will speak as South Asians but represent only their own interests -- not the collective interests of its diverse members. If South Asian is being used interchangeably with Indian, why not, some people ask, just use the term Indian American as more accurate and meaningful?

However interesting this conflict within the term South Asian itself is, the focus of this paper is the contestation between Indian American and South Asian. As the number of Indians in the United States continues to grow (125.6% increase between 1980 and 1990), the community and American society is engaging in a process of categorizing this community. An identity is being forged for this group of immigrants; even as it is being contested, it is being constructed.

As new ethnic/racial identities, how "real" are the South Asian and Indian American identities? Benedict Anderson offers the concept of the imagined community when talking about identity. "In fact all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, 1991: 6). Who then identifies as South Asian and as Indian American? Can they both be described as a single community with a history? What is

the difference between the South Asian and Indian American designation? What is the meaning of the difference? The question examined in this paper is, who is imagining the South Asian community and the Indian American community, and why is there a distinction between the two? Paul Brass believes that while many groups have all the elements for forming an ethnic community with a salient identity, "some groups never make (the transition from ethnic group to community), others make initially in modern times, and still others undergo repeatedly at different points in time" (Brass, 1992: 24). South Asian and Indian American could both be proto-ethnicities somewhere along this continuum between identity formation and ethnic community creation. The question is which of the two will emerge the winner; which label will dominate in American discourse and racial politics as the community continues to grow.

The claiming of the designations South Asian and Indian American are not just exercises in semantics. To the extent that identities can be claims to political interests, the different labels can be two different strategies in the arena of racial politics in the U.S.; strategies that will lead to different levels of access to political power, economic resources and social status for the community.

A preliminary look at the contested field of South Asian vs. Indian American identity construction led me to some interesting observations and discoveries. In looking at expressions of these identities in the Bay Area, four different arenas of contestation became apparent.

The first is the politically progressive arena where people most clearly and explicitly identified as South Asian. These are the most politicized elements in the community, the feminists, battered women, gays/lesbians, and young, alternative-lifestyle people. Some examples in this arena are: Shamakami, a group for "South Asian feminist, lesbian and bisexual women." Narika and Maitri offer "confidential referral and peer counseling service for South Asian women experiencing domestic abuse, unresolved conflict, or cultural adjustment." Trikone is a South Asian lesbian and gay group in the Bay Area. Hum magazine, described earlier, is "the alternative to South Asian publications that gloss over topics for 'the youth'". And Chaat is a "Desi Performance Collective of South Asian Multimedia Performances" created by young adults. Many of these groups were created out of more politicized understandings of the intersection of race, gender, class, age and sexual orientation. They see themselves as political expressions of the diversity in their communities and as a challenge to their existence on the margins of the community and American society.

The second arena of contestation consists of academic and literary circles. In this area, the category South Asian was used most often and consistently. The academic subject heading of "South Asian" was created as early as 1978. There is a proliferation of articles and books about South Asians in the North America, England and in the diaspora. Our Feet Walk the Sky and Making Waves are just two examples of the kind of South Asian literary work that is out there. In the Bay Area, at the University of California at Berkeley, there are some South Asian organizations such as the South Asian Student Association (an undergraduate group) and a graduate student group in formation, the South Asian Graduate Students. The Center for South Asia Studies sponsors many activities for South Asian students and in the "South Asian community". The History of South Asians in the United States is an annual course taught at the University. Within academic research, teaching, and literature there are numerous examples that use the designation South Asian and treat it as an uncontested identity. See the bibliography of this paper for some examples.

The third arena contains cultural and social organizations. Here are the expressions and manifestations of cultural and community persistence and preservation. In marked contrast to the two previous groups, organizations in this category clearly identified themselves as Indian, Indian Americans or Indo-Americans. Some examples include South India Fine Arts, Social Club for Indian Professional Singles, Indo-American Youth Charity Foundation, Indo-American Community Service Center, and Indo-Americans for Sports and Fitness. While some of these organizations might include people from other South Asian countries, they identify as being of Indian descent and designation.

The fourth and last contested arena I identified was the area of business organizations. There are many examples in the Bay Area alone of the Indian American community organizing themselves to pursue their economic and political interests. They seem to be organizing themselves to turn their economic power into political power to further their business, political and status interests. Some examples of business organizations in the Bay Area are the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, the Indian Yellow Pages, Indus Entrepreneurs, Federation of Indo-American Associations in Northern California, and the Indian Business and Professional Women (IBPW).

So, what does all this mean for the construction of an identity and community? Why are different groups pursuing different strategies and what are their interests? Who within these groups is articulating the strategy and why? Will the different strategies produce different results? And most important, what are the long term consequences of these strategies?

In this paper I start the process that will answer the above questions. I begin by examining the current race and ethnic literature on identity formation. by looking at existing models and applying them to this case study. As the above discussion demonstrates, there are multiple sites of contestation and different strategies being pursued. I have divided this literature review into two sections, one that looks at the 'race' literature and the other that looks at the ethnicity literature. How does the literature account for the fissures and different strategies?

Race Literature

Robert Miles, in *Racism After "Race Relations"*, contends that most attempts to deal with the issue of race in contemporary society have resulted in either a construction of a theory of 'race relations' or in studying the problem of racism. Both the 'race relations' paradigm and the racism paradigm have analytical problems which revolve around the status of race and how it is treated and used.

The concept of race was developed historically to mean "a biological hierarchy of fundamentally different

groups of people who possess a variable capacity for civilization" (Miles, 1993: 2). But all the "scientific evidence" to the contrary, it has been proven many times that there is no "fundamental" difference between groups of people. However, many writers in their use of the term race, often imply the existence of biological difference and the notion of distinct groups of people. While Miles writes that this is understandable; that it is difficult to talk about race without reifying it, he is troubled by it and by the difficulties in analysis this reification entails in theorizing racism.

As an alternative to the many authors that use race as an analytical concept in the study of race relations, Miles offers the study of racism. He believes that the study of racism is analytically more useful because its origins are directly attributed to the historically specific ideology of colonialism, where racism was constructed to justify the subordination of specific groups of people.

In fact, Miles' whole approach to the issue of race is to study "historically specific racism" (Miles, 1993: 11). He believes that racism should be understood as the mapping of exclusionary practices within capitalist social relations. Racism, according to him, is a manifestation of the creation of the Other, the unacceptable Other, to be dominated and exploited within the capitalist mode of production. He posits not the study of racism, but the study of the "different modalities of racism" within the historical matrix mapped by the development of capitalism and the nation state (Miles, 1993: 21). According to Miles, there is no such thing as race, just

a belief which is sometimes used by some social groups to construct the Other (and therefore the Self) in thought as a prelude to exclusion and domination, and by other social groups to define the Self (and so to construct an Other) as a means of resisting that exclusion" (Miles, 1993: 42).

Given this analytical distinction of racism, Miles argues against the utilization of the concept of race for several reasons. First, he believes that using the term race disguises the historical and material conditions of its construction. It disguises the fact that the idea of 'race' is part of a particular social process of signification, an important ideological moment in a historically specific process of domination. Secondly, he argues that the use of race and race relations also obscures the social construction of difference. In reifying 'race', differences are also reified which does not allow for the unpacking of the process of signification. And finally, this also leads to a limiting of the type of historical and empirical comparative work that can be done on race. Since our attention would be directed to other similar social definitions, in our comparative analysis we would miss other historical materialist analysis of the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.

In contrast to Miles, Michael Omi and Howard Winant in *Racial Formation in the United States* argue for the analytical centrality of the concept of race. They claim that race is a "fundamental dimension of social organization and cultural meaning in the U.S." (Omi and Winant, 1994: viii). They are very critical of the literature that reduces race to either ethnicity, class or nation. They take issue with this reductionism because they believe that the social nature of race is irreducible and that at its core, U.S. society is racially structured.

Omi and Winant offer a different approach to the study of racial dynamics in the U.S. which they call racial formation theory. They define racial formation to be the "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant, 1994: 55). It is a process which consists of a series of projects that link human representation and social structures. Human bodies are signified and organized. "Racial projects do the ideological 'work' of making these links. (It is) simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (Omi and Winant, 1994: 56). Any racialized society contains multiple racial projects that are engaged in a historical process of ideological subjugation. The present day racial hierarchy is the result of complex historical developments -- historical developments that relate to political movements, social dynamics, and state politics. Racial projects "connect what race means in a particular discursive practice (with) the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized" (Omi and Winant, 1994: 56).

Omi and Winant contend that contemporary racial formation results from ongoing processes of interaction between the state and racial groups. A "pattern of conflict and accommodation takes shape over time between racially based social movements and the policies and programs of the state" (Omi and Winant, 1994: 78). This sets the foundation for race relations in the U.S.

In addition, they contend that because the state is inherently racial, it becomes the site of racial conflict. It is engaged in a process of maintaining the hegemony of a particular racial rule, a racial ideology that would seem 'natural'. So, while particular racially based social movements might politically or legally challenge the state, and elicit a response, the state will still maintain its hegemony through law, policy-making and repressive apparatus. In response to political pressure, the state adopts policies of adsorption and insulation (i.e., reform).

Racial movements that challenge the state are political projects led by "intellectuals" that attempt to change particular racial hierarchies and dominant ideologies. They are attempts to re-articulate the racial order. Racial projects are used by individuals to identify and signify race; and by organizations and institutions to structure, organize and standardize race and racial groups.

While Miles and Omi and Winant propose the use of historical analysis to understand contemporary race relations, they offer divergent tools for analysis. Miles argues against the reification of race as an analytical concept and argues for the study of the process of Othering. He claims by studying the creation of the Other we can better unpack the process of domination and exclusion that is at work. Omi and Winant, on the other hand, assert the analytical centrality of race, one could argue the reification of race, and propose the study of racial projects which is the linking of ideology to social structures. Miles suggests the study of broader processes of

domination while Omi and Winant are only interested in racialized processes of domination. In either case, what do these theorists have to offer in the case of identity formation for Indians in the U.S.?

A Milesian analysis would suggest looking at where Indians are inserted into relations of production in the U.S., at the economic niches they occupy and the types of labor they supply to the American economy. The situation of Indian in England would be considered analytically distinct from the U.S. case, insofar as in England, due to the historical relationships of colonization, the process of Othering is materially and ideologically different. Here a study of the patterns of immigration and stratification would be used to explain the construction of Indians as the Other. Because the post-1965 immigrants from India came as educated professionals, Miles might say that they could escape the same kind of racism that is experienced by other racialized groups. The key question this case study would pose to Miles' theory is, can the process of Othering account for the contestation between the Indian American and South Asian designations? Can there be two distinct and separate processes of Othering going on at the same time, or is it still just one? What are the historical materialist circumstances that allow for this case? What is the particular form of racism that is occurring here?

In his analytical framework, Miles does not allow for group agency in terms of either self-designation or resistance. His process of Othering is ascriptive and the result of large historical political and economic relations. It results from group insertion into a web of historical and global relations of production in the capitalist mode of production that produce a particular form of racism. He would contend that while some groups might actively engage in the creation of a racial/ethnic identity, this would not have a significant impact compared to the larger forces at work. This analysis could not account for the differences between the construction of the Indian American identity and the South Asian identity, or why the identity is being constructed and contested in four in different arenas.

Similarly, in this case, Omi and Winant would ask what is the ideological link that is being forged between the representations of Indians in the U.S. and the social structures of domination. What is the racial project at work? Like Miles, they would suggest studying patterns of migration and stratification. But more importantly, they would suggest looking to the relationship of Indians to the state to explain both the construction and contestation of the two racial designations. They might suggest that this identity is a racially based social movement developing in multiple arenas to push for a re-articulation of the current racial order. The questions become why are there two different re-articulations or projects? Who are the actors of this racially based social movement and what is their project? They would look closely at the different political interests and goals of both the projects, and at the policies and responses of the state.

In the case of the 1976 Census battle between the India League of America and the Association of Indians in America (AIA), Omi and Winant might warrant that there were two different racial projects at work. One that sought to define Indians as a minority group for access to particular economic benefits, and another that recognized the class position of a highly educated and professional racial group. However, in their discussion of racial projects in the U.S., Omi and Winant cite the example of the process of transformation in the U.S. from a racial dictatorship to a racial democracy which occurred due to the racial movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Those racial movements were the articulation of a collective racial subjectivity. What they define as racial projects are much larger than the conflict of interests between two groups that represent less than 0.3% of the American population. Perhaps they might claim that the divergent strategies of the India League of America and the AIA were a part of two different racial projects, the New Right and the Neoliberals. Can the same racial group be engaged in two distinct racial projects? Would Omi and Winant even allow this level of agency and self-determination in this process of ideological subjugation?

In addition, Omi and Winant's theory also becomes somewhat problematic as it relates to the state. There are two points at which the Indian community currently comes into contact with the state: immigration and business development. This might account for the development of organizations such as the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Business and Professional Women. However, it does not explain why they would choose to organize as Indians, and not as South Asians, when it would seem they would have more numbers and representation under a larger, panethnic designation.

In conclusion, the particular perspective this race literature seems to provide suggests the study of racism in large historical context; in relation to the state and the capitalist mode of production. While it is important to place any analysis of racism in this context, it does not do an adequate job of explaining strategies of accommodation and resistance that subgroups within a racial group might utilize in forging their identity. When these authors do allow for group agency, they assume a homogeneity of interests, or at best do not allow for internal conflict and contestation over interests and goals. They do not account for both the diversity within a group, and the diversity of interests and actions that make identity formation an uneven, conflictive, and rich process.

Ethnicity Literature

Historically, the biologicistic and racist approach to the study of race dominated the field until it was challenged in the 1920s by idea that race was socially constructed. The concept of race changed from the central focus to being considered one of many different determinants of socially constructed ethnic group identity. The study of ethnicity soon replaced the study of race to the consternation of theorist such as Miles, Omi and Winant. Ethnicity was defined as the process of identity formation based on culture and heritage. Culture involved a variety of shared group characteristics such as language, religion, customs, and nationality, while heritage involved a sense of ancestry and descent. While culture could be objectively delineated, heritage was assumed by some to be of a primordial nature, a unique and inherent connection or sense of belonging to a particular group. This theory of the primordial nature of ethnicity was later argued to also be socially constructed.

Once it was established that ethnicity was socially determined, two paradigms developed. The first, the

assimilationist approach grew out of the study of white, European immigration and social patterns in the U.S. The assimilationists argued that members of minority groups would and should gradually modify their way of life and culture to conform to patterns of the dominant culture. In *Assimilation in American Life*, Milton Gordon proposed three conceptions of assimilation: Anglo-conformity, melting pot, and cultural pluralism. Anglo-conformity suggests a renunciation of particular ethnic identities in favor of conforming to an Anglo-Saxon norm. In the second, ethnic groups would merge or melt into a "new indigenous" culture. And in the cultural pluralism model, ethnic groups would retain their cultural identity "within the context of American citizenship and political and economic integration into American society" (Gordon, 1964: 85).

Herbert Gans, in an article entitled, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," supports the assimilationist paradigm by looking at third generation white ethnics. He is convinced that by this generation ethnic culture is but "an ancestral memory or an exotic tradition to be savored once in a while in a museum or at an ethnic festival" (Gans, 1994: 434). What is interesting, according to Gans, is that although the saliency of the ethnic identity has waned, people still continued to perceive themselves as ethnics, they still wanted to feel and express that identity. By the third generation, ethnicity was no longer ascriptive, but voluntarily assumed in different situations with no costs attached to clinging to the identity. Through assimilation, Gans claims, ethnicity becomes symbolic.

In *Ethnic Options*, Mary Waters also agrees with the notion of symbolic ethnicity with the caveat that while ethnicity is symbolic, flexible and voluntary for white middle class Americans, the same is not true for racialized minorities. "The social and political consequences of being Asian or Hispanic or black are not symbolic for the most part, or voluntary. They are real and often hurtful" (Waters, 1990: 156). This points to the key problem with this paradigm: it does not account for ascriptively racialized minorities and the persistence of racism and discrimination. So, even though a racialized minority might be structurally and culturally assimilated, they will still suffer negative consequences due to racism. The assumption of ethnicity will be neither voluntary nor costless for them.

Both the assimilationist and symbolic ethnicity paradigms seem inappropriate in the case of Indians in the U.S. for a variety of reasons. In complete contradiction to Gordon's predictions of an ethnic group gradually modifying its life-style to conform to the dominant white culture, Indians seem to be actively engaged in constructing and preserving their culture and way of life. They are creating religious, cultural, social, economic, and political organizations by the dozens to define and maintain their difference from the dominant culture. In fact, the longer Indians are in the U.S., the more they are re-creating their culture here. Indians are opening shops, restaurants, movie theaters, language classes, dance and music schools, temples, churches and gurdwaras in record numbers. Secondly, it is an empirical question whether the assumption of identity is voluntary, costless and situational for most Indians. To the extent that they are lumped together with Asian Americans their identity is not symbolic, but rather entails some cost. And finally, I would argue that for many Indians in the U.S., their Indian identity is not a "ancestral memory or an exotic tradition", but a very central component of who they are and how they experience the world.

The second approach within the ethnicity literature is based on an instrumentalist analysis of ethnic group formation and development. While ethnic groups are still united by a shared culture and origins, here ethnicity is believed to be more salient when it yields material results. In this case, ethnicity is not only sentimental, it is also used as a resource or a strategic tool. Ethnic group mobilization is equated with interest group mobilization for access to political and economic resources. The boundaries of ethnicity get defined by shared interests along with a shared culture.

Joane Nagel, in an article entitled, "The Political Construction of Ethnicity," conceptualizes identity formation as instrumentalist in relation to the state. She writes that cultural differences are not reliable predictors of ethnic identity formation due to the fluid nature of boundaries. She believes that ethnicity should be considered as partly ascribed and partly volitional; partly situational and partly strategic. She claims that the shifts in ethnic boundaries tend to be strategic and thus politically constructed. Ethnic mobilization occurs in response to economic competition where political access is structured along ethnic lines. Recognition by the state of ethnicity as the basis for political organization and claimsmaking legitimates ethnic mobilization and ethnic identity formation. The policies and structures of the state provides the rationale and impetus for the selection of ethnicity as the basis for mobilization and ascriptively designate ethnic boundaries. Competitive advantage in this arena is attributed to large numbers, effective organization, and increased institutionalization of the ethnic community.

In this paradigm, the state plays a significant role. Ethnic mobilization occurs in relationship to the state, state policies, state resources, and state access. Both the character of the state and state policies become important determinants of instrumental ethnic identity formation and persistence. Nagel focuses on the structure of political access and the content of political policies as the key determinants of identity formation. She looks at constitutional and regional boundaries as determinants of ethnically based political access and participation. She also studies political policies as they relate to language, land and resource distribution.

Paul Brass makes a similar political construction argument in his book, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. However, he breaks down the process more by including an analysis of the role of elites in identity construction. He makes two arguments: the first is that ethnicity and nationalism are neither primordial nor pre-determined, rather they are political and socially constructed by elites in pursuit of particular material goals. And secondly, ethnicity and nationalism are "inseparably" connected to the modern centralizing state. In his model, ethnic group elites play a particular role in relationship to the state where they draw upon cultural symbols and create ethnic boundaries in order to protect their interests or gain political or economic advantages for their group.

The process of ethnic identity formation is in itself significant for the identity of the group. It is

the result of interactions between elites and the state. The strategies used by elites, the cultural markers they mobilize around, the demands they make on the state will determine the boundaries of the ethnic identity.

The process of ethnic identity formation has consequences for the very definition of the ethnic group in question and for its persistence. The cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage. They become symbols and referents for the identification of members of the group, which are called up in order to create a political identity more easily (Brass, 1991: 15).

Brass makes a distinction between ethnic group or category and ethnic community. An ethnic category is an objective differentiation of people based on distinctive cultural characteristics and symbolic references. There may be some overlap in cultural characteristics shared by different groups. An ethnic community then is a clear and self-conscious delineation of group difference where old symbols are infused with new subjective significance and attempts are made to "bring a multiplicity of symbols and attributes into congruence with each other" (Brass, 1991: 63).

The transition from ethnic category to ethnic community requires the creation of an ethnic identity based on particular cultural symbols that are used to differentiate the group and establish criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Elites use cultural symbols to create internal cohesion within the group and to differentiate the group from other ethnic groups. An ethnic identity then becomes a claim to a particular status and level of recognition. At this point an ethnic group becomes a culturally based interest group engaged in making political demands on the state. With an intensification of multisymbol congruence and subjective meaning along with increased demands for rights, the ethnic community moves into nationality formation. According to Brass, "ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and in postindustrial societies undergoing dramatic social change" (Brass, 1991: 25). This involves competition among elites, classes and leadership groups within and between different ethnic groups for power, resources and status.

In the process of ethnic community and identity formation elites use a variety of strategies. Elites try to attach new value and subjective meaning to particular cultural symbols. The choice of symbols often has a material basis; symbols are chosen for the potential to lead to economic advantage to the group or the elites. Sometimes the same symbols are used at different times for contrary objectives, but they are always used to separate people, even people who share aspects of the same culture. The challenge is for elites to use a multiplicity of symbols and yet make them congruent and meaningful boundaries for inclusion and exclusion. The study of ethnicity for Brass is the study of "politically-induced cultural change" (Brass, 1991: 75).

Elites engage in strategies of ethnic identity formation for control over political power and economic resources. Groups of elites within an ethnic group compete with each other for control, or elites from different ethnic groups compete with each other. A third struggle might entail a fight for control with the state and the groups that dominate it.

In addition to the key role played by elites, Brass claims that the state plays an active role in the formation and decline of ethnic identities. He emphasizes the interaction between the state and elites. Depending on state strategies, institutional structures and government policies, ethnic elites will engage in either inter or intra- group competition and struggles with the state. The nature of the state will also effect this process. He proposes a view of the state not as an impartial arena for interest group, but as "a complex set of persisting institutions over which elites in conflict are engaged in a struggle to control" (Brass, 1991: 271). The state is a source of resources and a distributor of resources, along with being the promoter of new values. The key determinants of ethnic identity formation and nationalism then are patterns of elite competition and patterns of elite interaction with the state.

Yen Le Espiritu, in her book, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*, argues for a slightly different conceptualization of ethnicity. She writes that the primordial and instrumentalist approaches imply that because people derive sentimental and material support from their identity, that their ethnic identity is a matter of choice - "in the sense that individuals and groups can choose to keep or discard their ethnicity according to their changing psychological and material needs" (Espiritu, 1992: 6). However, this does not take into consideration the ascriptive nature of ethnic categorization in U.S. society. More powerful groups, in an attempt to dominate others, impose "categorical identities that (are) defined in reference to inherent differences from or inferiority to the dominant group" (Espiritu, 1992: 6).

From her study of Asian Americans in the U.S., Espiritu concludes that Asian American panethnicity is an ascriptive identity imposed by a dominant group that cannot distinguish between diverse Asian ethnic groups. In this process of categorization, individuals who have little in common are lumped together in an indistinguishable single category. Panethnicity emerges out of a racist discourse that perceives ethnically diverse groups as homogenous.

However, Espiritu goes on to argue that just because panethnicity is conceived in the minds of the dominant group, it does not mean that it cannot be used as a political resource for the categorized group. Once constructed and imposed by the outside, panethnicity can become a base for mobilizing large groups of people and making political demands. The process of categorization that is created for domination and control can also be used for resistance and mobilization.

In studying panethnicity, Espiritu claims that attention should be focused on an examination of the structural conditions that allow for its construction. Political structures within a society become the key indicators of what leads to an elaboration of panethnic identities. In the U.S., the state structures political access along interest and ethnic group lines. Since there is a competitive advantage in larger numbers, small ethnic groups, ascriptively categorized, can act collectively for maximum access.

That is what Asian Americans did in the four examples that Espiritu offers. Smaller ethnic groups, such as

Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese, organized themselves into one large ascriptively set category for maximum advantage in the areas of electoral politics, social service funding, Census classification, and reactive solidarity when faced with anti-Asian violence. In all four cases there was strength in numbers, so Asian Americans used the numbers they can marshal under the umbrella of Asian American and used it to their advantage. This is clearly a case of situational and instrumental ethnic identity formation within the arena of an ascriptively set ethnic category.

In her book, Espiritu asks the question, how and why do diverse groups come together, mute their differences, and act collectively under a common identity. The answer she develops is that it is partly the process of categorization and partly a response to the structuring of political access.

All three authors, Nagel, Brass and Espiritu, link the development of identity to politics and the state, yet each offers a different approach. Nagel claims that to understand the process of identity formation one must study the structuring of political access by the state and the content of political policies set by the state. Brass amends this argument by including the strategies and actions of elites into the equation. He contends that the boundaries of ethnic communities are established through the manipulation of cultural makers by elites engaged in struggles for control of resources vis-a-vis the state. He believes that the state is the arena in which competition among elites occurs, where they mobilize their ethnic communities for maximum economic and political advantage. Espiritu adds to this argument by recognizing that there is an ascriptive moment in these identity formations. Particularly in the case of panethnic identity formation, the dominant group lumps ethnic groups together out of racist ignorance and convenience. This initial ascriptive moment sets the preliminary boundaries for the identity. However, akin to Brass' elites, within these boundaries "ethnic entrepreneurs" engage in a process of institution and organization building for competitive advantage. Ethnic groups appropriate the ascriptively set designations and use them for a competitive advantage to build strength in their struggle for the interests of the group.

This instrumentalist approach to understanding identity formation can account for some aspects of the case of Indians in the U.S. It is possible that in the four sites of contestation, academia, progressive organizations, business, and social/cultural organizations, different elites are engaging in different strategies for access to political and economic resources. Insofar as the state has already set the parameters of political and economic resource access for interest groups, elites in these four arenas are utilizing and manipulating different cultural symbols to mobilize Indians. By drawing attention to elites or ethnic entrepreneurs, this model gives agency to the multiple actors involved and accounts for multiple strategies in the process of identity construction.

However, inasmuch as this approach can account for some key aspects of the Indian case, there are still unresolved questions. The model conceives of identity formation as a process of political mobilization vis-a-vis the state. For Brass, the state is the arena in which elites compete. While it is apparent that the Indian business community elites are constructing and mobilizing around the Indian American identity, as in the case of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, the relationship between progressive organizations such as Maitri and Trikone, or social/cultural organization such as the Indo-American Community Services Center, and the state are not clear. It is possible that the same elites are at work manipulating symbols in all four arenas, but then why are they mobilizing around two different identity designations?

Nagel, Brass and Espiritu, develop the instrumentalist approach based on the attainment of political goals: groups organize themselves according to the political parameters set by the state and elites construct identities for political advantage. There is no accounting for non-political, non-state oriented goals and strategies. It is possible to argue that the progressive political organizations are not interested in political access or resources, but are constructing an identity to re-claim self-esteem and recognition within the Indian community and the broader community. Social and cultural groups could be seen as organizing themselves to preserve their culture in a new country and break the isolation of a few numbers. Academic groups could be understood to be engaged in an intellectual project independent of political policy formation. While these may all be cases of interest group organization, it is not clear how they relate to the political construction of ethnic identity.

Concluding the literature review

In concluding the literature review, there are two areas I would like to address in the race and ethnicity literature that I think the case study of Indians in the U.S. highlights. The first has to do with the bringing together of the race and ethnicity literature in terms of the issues of categorization and agency, and the second deals with the issue of multiple and divergent goals, strategies and outcomes of the contestation over identity formation.

The race literature focuses on the categorization aspect of identity formation, while the ethnicity literature analyzes the role of agency within a group, and the internal processes of appropriation and negotiation. One emphasizes the broad historical context of domination within the capitalist mode of production while the other focuses on the internal process of identifying cultural makers and community formation. However, the two literatures need to be brought together. What effect do the broad historical processes of domination have on the internal processes of elite competition and negotiation? At what point do these two literatures come together?

In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Karl Marx writes, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1991: 15). In the case of identity formation, the broader historical processes of domination set the stage for the internal dynamics. While elites develop strategies and manipulate symbols, they do so not under circumstances of their own choosing.

Espiritu eludes to this in her acknowledgment of the parameters of agency set by the categorization of Asian Americans. She writes,

For the less powerful groups, ethnicity is not always voluntary, but may be imposed by a more powerful group. This imposed ethnicity may or may not match the subordinate group's established cultural and organizational practices. Within the limits of their situation, Asian Americans have transformed not only themselves, but also the conditions under which they act. Adopting the dominant group's categorization of them, Asian Americans have institutionalized pan-Asianism as their primary political entity--thereby enlarging their own capacities to make claims on the resources of the dominant groups (Espiritu, 1992: 161).

However, she does not discuss why some groups are dominant and others subordinate. Because she does not look at the processes of racial formation or Othering a la Omi and Winant, and Miles, she does not account for the unequal power between groups, or why one group would choose to dominant another. This is where the race and ethnicity literature would come together. In studying Indians in the U.S., not only must the issue of agency be central, but so must the historical context of economic forces be kept in focus. One informs the other.

The second issue I encountered with the literature deals with the internal contestation in identity formation. As the four sites of contestation illustrate, within a single group there can be multiple and divergent goals which can lead to different strategies and outcomes.

Brass discusses cases where different groups of elites within an ethnic group compete with each other to control the group and thus benefit from group mobilization. Different groups of elites compete with each other, but they compete for the same resources and political access, they do not seek different and divergent resources and access. In the case of Indians, four different groups are engaging in strategies to reach four different goals. What they want is different, so their strategies are different and who they each compete with is different. Intra elite competition might be going on in each of the four arenas, but the elites in each arena are not competing with each other. Both Brass and Espiritu ignore and marginalize the many other voices within an ethnic group that are a part of the group and a part of a process of identity construction. In the case of Asian Americans,

pan-Asianism has been primarily the ideology of native born, American-educated, and middle-class Asians. Embraced by students, artists, professionals, and political activists, pan-Asian consciousness thrived on college campuses and in urban settings. However, it barely touched the Asian ethnic enclaves (Espiritu, 1992: 50).

Espiritu acknowledges the multiplicity of voices within the ethnic group but does not go on to theorize or problematize it. This difference in conceptualization is significant insofar as the character and nature of the identity determines status, political access and economic well-being. As Brass writes, "the process of ethnic identity formation has consequences for the very definition of the ethnic group and its persistence" (Brass, 1992: 15).

Espiritu understands that the "creation of a new name is a significant symbolic move in constructing an ethnic identity" (Espiritu, 1992: 33). However, she give no accounting of the diversity of interpretations, strategies and interests at stake within the group. Brass allows for internal struggles over control of the group by elites; different elites appropriate and manipulated cultural markers to create group cohesion. However, he assumes that all elites are struggling for the same economic and political resources. He does not allow for different factions struggling for different goals, and therefore utilizing different strategies. So, in the case of politically progressive groups such as lesbians and feminists, their goals might be very different than the goals of the professional Indian women. They might be utilizing different strategies, and therefore appropriate a different ethnic designation. Insofar as academics might feel like they are addressing a different audience than the business community, they may choose to identify as South Asians and not as Indian American. The end result, however, is that four different constellation of actors are organizing themselves under two different designations within one ethnic group. What are the conditions that allow one ethnic group to define itself in two different ways? Will the two identities continue to exist side by side or will one be eventually subjugated to the other? Can the two designations continue to co-exist as the community expands and gains more visibility? And ultimately, what are the consequences of the two different designations?

Hypothesis: Ethnicization or Racialization

The construction of identity is both an act of ascription and self-determination. When an identity is designated by external groups it is a linking of representation to social structures and orders; it is an expression of domination. As Miles says, it is the creation of the unequal Other. But, identity construction is also an act of resistance. It is an explicit claim to status and recognition; it is an "enlarging of (the group's) capacities to make claims" on political and economic resources.

In the case of Indians in the U.S., it might be that different elites see themselves as engaging in a process of ethnicization or racialization for the group. South Asian as a panethnic designation is more of a racial category. It does not distinguish between its diverse cultural and national members. It is a lumping together of ethnically diverse people based on loose phenotypical and geographical origination similarities, such as blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans. Indian American, on the other hand, might be considered more of an ethnic identity with a clearly identified single nation of origin. It could be compared to ethnicities such as Irish-Americans, Polish-Americans and German-American.

Both processes of identity formation, either racialization and ethnicization, require distinctive condition and have different and far-reaching consequences. One might be a racial formation project intent on challenging the existing racial order in the U.S. The other might be an attempt to assimilate into the dominant culture with the most advantage and least disruption to the racial order. Either way, the construction of an

