

THESIS

HOME, HALF A WORLD AWAY:
THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF ACCULTURATION AMONG INDIAN INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

HOME, HALF A WORLD AWAY: THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF ADJUSTMENT AMONG INDIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

In this thesis I contend that Indian international students at Colorado State University strive to adjust to life in the United States in accordance with a cognitive “model” of what being well-adjusted entails. This model of being well-adjusted is culture-specific and reflects a negotiation between Indian cultural values and the challenges of life as a CSU student. This cultural logic of adjustment configures subjective well-being in a context-specific way, meaning individuals who are more able to map onto the cultural model of being well-adjusted are likely to experience better subjective well-being than those who are unable. I suggest that accounting for the cultural patterning of acculturation is a step towards a more nuanced understanding of the adjustment process of international students. Additionally, this approach provides a more emic picture of the dynamics of subjective well-being among groups of international students.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The sun is high in the sky on a Sunday afternoon in late August. The river is cold but refreshing. Four Indian international students and one American graduate student take turns casting fishing line into a small section of the Cache la Poudre River, mostly catching snags on rocks. For one of the Indian students in particular, the day is especially significant. 24 hours earlier, he was in India getting ready to depart on a voyage that would significantly alter the rest of his life. He now sits (jetlagged, no doubt) on a rock surrounded by the flowing water of the second river he has ever swam in in his young life. This day of firsts is but a foreshadowing of the multitude of firsts he will encounter during his time as a student in the United States. The other three Indian students collectively start to tell him about life in Colorado, providing their takes on what he can expect to encounter in the coming months, as well as some advice on how to handle these new experiences. A near-permanent nervous smile adorns the new arrival's face as he reacts to what he hears with a visible mix of excitement and uncertainty. His culturally informed acculturation process has begun.

The preceding was a snippet from a session of participant observation I conducted during the course of my thesis research on the cultural adjustment of Indian international students at Colorado State University (CSU). The central finding of this study is that the sociocultural background of Indian international students, as well as the on-the-ground reality of their new sociocultural environment, structures the way they adjust to life as a CSU student in Fort Collins. Yielded via ethnographically grounded mixed methods, the results indicate the presence of a culturally shared notion of what successful adjustment looks like. Additionally, this *cultural model of being well-adjusted* to life at CSU patterns a second cultural model of *subjective well-being* that overlaps significantly with the model of adjustment. In essence, “being well” as an

Indian international student at CSU means to have achieved *consonance* with, or to have embodied, a culturally structured model of adjustment.

At this point some readers may protest that this all seems a bit obvious; of course being “well-adjusted” will increase the likelihood of experiencing a positive state of subjective well-being. A few readers may even be of the opinion that the use of words and terms like *consonance* and *cultural models* does little more than overcomplicate the picture. While I sympathize with these critiques, I regret to inform these readers that the existing literature on international students and acculturation does not adequately address the cultural structuring of acculturation. Existing studies tend to gauge acculturation through the use of existing scales, such as the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (Ryder et al., 2000), that do not necessarily reflect the study context. Further, studies that do make an effort to account for cultural context generally focus on the culture of the host city or nation, rather than the way the cultural background of a group of international students informs the adjustment process. What I argue is needed (and what I have set out to accomplish in this thesis) is an ethnographically informed exploration of the cultural structuring of acculturation among international students.

Fortunately, there are a number of established conceptual tools within the field of anthropology—particularly cognitive anthropology—that are well-suited to the task of teasing out the ways in which cultural background comes into play during the acculturation process. For cognitive anthropologists, the ways in which culture interacts with the mind is of primary concern. One way this interaction has been conceptualized is through the idea that cultural knowledge is stored and operationalized in the form of *cultural models*, which are cognitive templates that steer perception and action in ways that reflect cultural ideas and values (Holland and Quinn, 1987). A cultural model that is widely recognized within a cultural group is

considered a *consensus* model (Romney et al., 1987). Cultural models are not deterministic, but rather are generalized versions of real-life situations that require interpretation and work on the part of individuals. In the literature, the extent to which a person embodies a consensus cultural model is often referred to as their level of *consonance* with said model (Dressler et al., 2007).

Cultural consonance offers a potent means of accounting for the role of culture in relation to *subjective well-being* (a person's self-defined satisfaction and fulfillment in life). Researchers like Dressler (2005), Dressler et al. (2005, 2007), McDade (2002), and others, have repeatedly demonstrated the positive correlation between cultural consonance and subjective well-being. In general, their findings suggest that being consonant with the consensus values and ideals of one's cultural group mitigates stress and heightens subjective well-being.

In this thesis, I utilize these conceptual tools to make sense of the cultural elements of the acculturation process of Indian international students at CSU, as well as examine the way well-being is impacted by these cultural factors of adjustment. Taking an "ethnographic bookends" approach, I employed a set of methodologies guided by this sociopsychocultural perspective. I began with a roughly 6 month ethnographic phase, which consisted of participant observation, open-ended interviews, and eventually a more structured set of interviews. Analysis of this qualitative data, which largely consisted of coding interviews based on emergent themes and relationships between themes, informed the construction of a survey. The results of the survey added richness to my dataset and allowed me to test my interpretations of the qualitative data by way of statistical analysis. The results of my ethnographic data suggested the presence of a shared cultural idea of what it means to be well adjusted to life at CSU. Thus, I attempted to capture this model in the survey by asking respondents to identify their level of agreement to statements on which I anticipated a significant level of homogeneous thinking. I then conducted

consensus analysis on the survey responses with the help of the computer software, UCINET. Stata software was used to conduct t-tests on associations between subjective well-being (dependent variable) and responses to a various survey items (independent variables). My familiarity with the qualitative data informed my interpretation of quantitative data, and the results of the statistical analyses helped clarify some of the fuzzier aspects of the qualitative findings. This cross-comparison is a major advantage of the mixed methods approach to social science research, and was instrumental in finding coherence in the data as a whole.

This thesis is divided into six chapters, the first of which is the present introduction. Chapter Two provides a sketch of the history and context of Indian international students. Here I will discuss the politics of education in India, the practices and policies of U.S. institutions of higher education regarding international students, as well as some of the demographics of international students in general and from India specifically. Chapter Three addresses the relevant literature on international student adjustment, subjective well-being, and cultural consonance, as well as a further discussion of the cognitive anthropology approach to understanding culture. Chapter Four lays out, in detail, the methods of data collection and analysis used in this study. My findings are presented in Chapter Five, along with a discussion of their implications and limitations. Chapter six concludes the thesis by summarizing the results and reiterating the importance and value of taking seriously the cultural logic of acculturation.

Chapter 2 – Context: Indian International Students at CSU

2.1. Introduction

Anthropology as a discipline is exemplary among the sciences for its emphasis on understanding contexts in order to understand phenomena. In the interest of upholding this powerfully important sensibility, I will devote this chapter to providing a sketch of the social, historical, and political backdrop upon which the experiences of Indian international students at CSU ensue.

The past few decades have seen the idea of “context” in anthropology change in important ways. With the rise of globalization and increased global connectedness, notions like “context”, “setting”, and even “culture” itself, have been reexamined (see Appadurai, 1996; Ortner, 1984; Hruschka, 2009). In essence, these reexaminations have complicated the notion that a given “culture” can be neatly tied to a particular setting. Rather, contemporary peoples live their lives in a world where the traditional boundaries of place and space are blurred. Culture may be better thought of as information learned and transmitted via common settings and experiences. In light of this, any contemporary ethnographic research must be attentive to contexts and sources of cultural influence beyond just the immediate environment. In the case of Indian international students in Fort Collins, the spatially distant yet omnipresent context of influence is India. By this I mean that the Indian context from which Indian students at CSU come from plays an integral role in their conduct in Fort Collins. Due to this, an account of the political, social, cultural, and economic factors that stem from the Indian context and that may come to bear on the experiences of Indian international students at CSU is necessary.

2.2. The Indian Context

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012), more than half of the 200,621 Indian students who were pursuing a degree in higher education in another country in 2010 were studying in the United States. In fact, from 2008 to 2012, 168,034 Indians held F-1 (full-time student) visas in the United States. This puts India second only to China in terms of the number of students sent to the United States for higher education. 10.3% of Indians who come to the United States to pursue higher education are going for a Bachelor's, 78.6% for a Master's, and 11.1% for a doctorate (Ruiz, 2014). According to a study funded by Brookings and J.P. Morgan Chase called "Global Cities Initiative", 69.9% of foreign students from India are pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math, placing them second in this regard among the 74 countries included in the study (Ruiz, 2014).

Mary Mederios Kent, of the United States Population Reference Bureau, noted a decrease in the rate of growth of the number of Indian students on US campuses back in 2010 (Kent, 2010). She speculates that this was due to the recent recession in the US, as well as the growth of the Indian economy. She also notes that since the vast majority of Indian students who study in the US are graduate students, and since many have historically seen a graduate degree in the US as a step towards long-term residency in America, students may be less likely to make the investment if they are not confident a job will be waiting for them when they graduate. Combine this with the fact that job market in India has continued to improve despite the global recession (though the growth in recent years has diminished), and it starts to make sense why the number of Indian students applying to American Universities was in decline for a few-year period. While Kent's speculations may not have been totally false at the time, more recent trends indicate that

they may not hold anymore. The 2012-2013 academic year saw a 22% jump in Indian applicants, while 2013-2014 saw an even greater jump at 32% (Fischer, 2014). This growth has fed a perception of India as the up-and-coming main sender of students to the United States; a perception that has been further fueled by the fact that there has been a slight decline in applicants from China for the past two years (Fischer, 2014).

2.2.1. Politics of Reservation in India

A number of informants, when asked why they and so many other Indians would choose to pursue a graduate degree in the United States, attributed some of the impetus to the politics of reservation in India. Since independence, the Indian national government has mandated public higher education quotas for Scheduled Castes (15 percent) and Scheduled Tribes (7.5 percent), and some states have since added a 27 percent quota for other backward classes (OBCs) (Argawal, 2006). In 2005, the high-profile case of *P.A. Inamdar and Others v. the state of Maharashtra and Others* expanded these affirmative action policies to private professional educational institutions (Argawal, 2006). All told, the scale of affirmative action policies in education is uniquely large in India. Of course, for many Indians who happen to have been born into disadvantage, the politics of reservation in India provide crucial educational, professional, and political opportunities that might not otherwise exist. Yet, for many in the Indian middle class these policies can limit their opportunities to varying degrees. The following is an interview excerpt that illustrates the sometimes negative effects of reservation policies on middle-class Indians.

R: "...So a long way back they decided that some of the people have a higher caste and they gave them like no reservation. There is no government supporting. There is like local lower category, those people have a reservation.

Max: Oh, for seats in government and such?

R: I got, for example, a 3.5 GPA. The lower caste guy got only 2.5. But because of that system it put him in medical school but it won't put me in medical school. That kind of sucks. That's the biggest drawback in India. [Rajinder – June 13, 2013]

In light of the political landscape of education in India, the continually increasing number of Indians pursuing degrees abroad makes a good deal of sense. Middle and upper-middle class students in India can find themselves left off of acceptance lists at the most prestigious Indian universities simply due to their family's economic status. According to my informants, the quality gap between the top Indian schools and the remaining options is quite wide. Of those who were denied admission to the top-level schools and are also unsatisfied with their remaining educational options in India, "world-class" schools in the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere can become attractive options. Though none of my informants explicitly made the connection, one could speculate that the growth of the Indian economy in recent decades has helped make this a real option for more Indians than ever before.

2.3. The American Context

Of course, the influence of the Indian context is only as strong as the Fort Collins/CSU context allows it to be. More specifically, the worldview an Indian international student arrives at CSU with will be challenged by the on-the-ground reality of life as a student at CSU. Thus, a bit of background on the relevant sociocultural, political, and economic context of CSU and the

United States more broadly, is helpful in making sense of the experiences of the student participants in this study.

2.3.1. International Students in the United States

According to the Institute of International Education, there were 31% more international students enrolled in US colleges and universities in 2011-2012 than there were a decade earlier. During the 2012-2013 school year there were a record 819,644 international students enrolled at US colleges and universities (Ruiz, 2014). The fact that so many of these students are pursuing graduate degrees that may make them valuable on the global job market makes them a powerful economic force. This force is felt not only when international students graduate and enter the job market, but of course also through the sheer amount of tuition dollars they account for. In fact, it is estimated that foreign students input \$20 billion into the US economy each year (Kent, 2010).

Tuition dollars from international students have increasingly become an important source of revenue for American universities, and many actively seek to draw higher numbers of foreign students. Colorado State, for example, has recently launched its INTO CSU program, which is premised on attracting more international students. While CSU may be among the more aggressive universities in the United States when it comes to international recruitment, they are far from alone. Sheila Slaughter and Larry Leslie's 1999 book, *Academic Capitalism: politics, policies, and the entrepreneurial university*, identify the emerging brand of capitalism they call academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie, 1999). The authors conducted research in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia, and identify academic capitalism as an emerging trend in each location, although timing and extent do vary (Marginson and Considine 2000).

Using resource dependency theory, Slaughter and Leslie argue that universities will do whatever is necessary to maintain revenue flows and maximize institutional prestige (Slaughter and Leslie 1999). In the United States, the trend of academic capitalism can be said to have taken off in the 1980s, following a move on the part of the federal government to transfer ownership of patents generated through federally funded research from the federal government to the university (Marginson and Considine 2000). This move, the authors argue, accelerated the presence of academic capitalism, and the mindset that accompanies it, among universities in the United States. In the context of academic capitalism, international students constitute a valuable resource not only in terms of tuition dollars but also in terms of global prestige for a university.

There are two kinds of visas available to foreign students in the United States: M-1 and F-1. M-1 visas are for students in nonacademic programs, such as vocational training (but not including language training), while F-1 visas are for students at colleges, universities, high schools, or in a language training program (uscis.gov). Though I did not ask every single participant, it is safe to assume that as full-time graduate students they all held F-1 visas. F-1 visas are accompanied by a number of restrictions with regards to off-campus employment. F-1 students are not permitted to work until they have completed one academic year at their institution, after which there are three types of employment they are allowed to pursue: Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT) (uscis.gov). Approximately 45% of foreign students extend their visas to work in the same metro area as the college or university they attended (Ruiz, 2014), meaning many of the Indian students I spent time with are likely to pursue one of these work options at some point during their time in the United States. As with going to school in America, working in America is surely

different from working in India in some ways, and foreign students who wish to work while studying abroad are likely to have to adjust to the situation. For students who extend their F-1 visas at CSU-Fort Collins in particular, adjustment to another location in the United States may also be necessary, as the Fort Collins-Loveland metro area ranks near the bottom of the list in terms of students taking up OPT employment in the same metro area as the school they attended (Ruiz, 2014).

2.3.2 The CSU-Fort Collins Context

Colorado State University, located in Fort Collins, Colorado, is a large public research university with a solid reputation internationally. Approximately 30,700 students attend CSU, 78% of which are Colorado residents (colostate.edu/facts-figures.aspx). 1,600 of these students are international students, and about 200 of these students are Indian nationals (colostate.edu/facts-figures.aspx). As of the fall of 2013, 206 of the 214 Indian students enrolled at CSU were graduate students, 129 of which were pursuing a Master's or PhD through the College of Engineering (figures provided by INTO-CSU via personal correspondence).

The gender makeup of the Indian student community at CSU is notable in that 165 of the 214 Indian students on campus are male (as of fall of 2013) (personal correspondence with INTO-CSU, October 21, 2013). The prevalence of male Indian students is likely due to many factors, perhaps the most powerful of which are the gender norms and expectations in Indian society. In many ways, Indian society is male-dominated, or at the very least highly gendered. For instance, during the semester I spent in north India while an undergrad in 2011, I saw virtually no women driving outside of larger urban areas, and even in those areas it was a rare

sight. Many of my male Indian informants discussed having to learn how to cook for themselves upon moving to Fort Collins, as most or all of the cooking duties in India were performed by their mothers or sisters. One of my female informants shared with me that she was often pressured into learning how to cook by her mother, but that she did not enjoy cooking and was glad she had roommates who could help her out in Fort Collins. It is in terms of access to education and employment, however, that Indian gender expectations have perhaps the greatest bearing on the gender makeup of Indian students at CSU.

Though a few of my informants felt that the situation has been slowly changing, the traditional expectation for Indian men is to pursue a career that will make them an attractive potential groom. For women, the highest expectation has traditionally been to marry a worthy groom and focus on raising a family. Increasingly, however, there has been a societal push for women's education. Despite this trend, many of my informants admitted that a certain level of conservatism still characterizes the stance towards women in Indian society. Many of them recognized this as a major factor impacting the gender makeup of Indian students at CSU and in general. Given the potential differences between this cultural backdrop and the cultural context of Fort Collins, the adjustment process for both male and female Indian international students may involve some renegotiation of gender expectations.

It is no doubt impossible to adequately dissect every single aspect of the "Indian international student at CSU context", not least of all because of the fact that, despite some shared experiences, there are likely as many contexts as there are students. Instead, what I have put forth in this chapter is a broad-stroked outline of the background information that, from my perspective, seems to have some sort of relevance on the dynamics of subjective well-being among the Indian international students I spent time with, interviewed, and surveyed.

Chapter 3: Grounding an Integrated Theory and Methodology in the Scholarly Literature

3.1. Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Early use of the concept of acculturation largely referred to the group-level phenomena by which changes in cultural patterns would occur during extended intergroup contact (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). A distinction between group-level, or collective, acculturation, and individual-level, or psychological, acculturation, was later made by Graves (1967). Over the course of the subsequent few decades of acculturation research, usage of term received criticism for its synonymy with ‘assimilation’ in the literature (Berry, 1997). Interculturation (Clanet, 1990), an alternative concept perhaps able to provide a less asymmetrical framework for understanding the dynamics of intercultural adjustment, has aided more recent research. According to Berry (1997), the added sensibilities of the concept of interculturization, including a recognition of the productive properties of the intercultural situation (i.e. the emergence of new cultures), have largely been brought under the umbrella of the concept of acculturation in more contemporary research. It is this notion of the emergence of a new cultural context unique to the international student experience that is the focus of this article. Is there reason to suspect that unique sociocultural configurations take shape among groups of co-national international students? If so, how can these contexts be best conceptualized? Do these contexts reconfigure a cultural notion of subjective well-being? And finally, how might ‘acculturation’ to this unique context impact individual subjective well-being? I argue that all of these important questions call for an ‘individual in-context’ approach.

In a particularly comprehensive article, Berry (1997) outlines four major “acculturation strategies” from the point of view of the non-dominant group, suggesting that individuals from the non-dominant group can be characterized as generally employing one of these four strategies. Individuals who seek to eschew their old cultural identity and adapt a new one that more closely corresponds to the dominant or host culture are said to be taking up the strategy of ‘assimilation’. Alternatively, those that place primary importance on retaining their pre-existing cultural identity--often actively avoiding overexposure to host culture--are seen as employing a strategy of ‘separation’. ‘Integration’ is suggested as the middle-ground alternative to the assimilation-separation dichotomy. Individuals who employ this acculturation strategy place importance on both maintaining a connection to their home culture and integrating aspects of host culture that meet their discretion or that are necessitated by some aspect of their lives. Lastly, ‘marginalization’ is defined as an involuntary condition of acculturation that occurs when non-dominant groups or individuals are simultaneously unable to maintain their cultural identity (due to lack of resources and power) and kept from integrating (due to discrimination by the dominant group) (Berry, 1997). While potentially helpful in terms of orienting the researcher toward a spectrum of acculturative conditions, further reading of the literature (e.g. Tseng and Newton, 2002; Kagan and Cohen, 1990) suggests that invariably some unique blend of these strategies, hinged on multiple and interacting factors, is employed by those in transnational or transcultural settings--including international students.

Recent work in the study of international students and acculturation has rightfully taken a turn toward a more bilinear approach that is attentive to both acculturation (to mainstream, or host culture) and enculturation (to home, or origin culture) (Kagan and Cohen, 1990; Yoon et al., 2008; Du, 2012; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Khandelwal, 2002; Al-Sharideh and Goe, 1998; Atri

et al., 2006; Ying and Han, 2006). Du's (2012) longitudinal study of Chinese international students, for example, found that social connectedness to Americans and American culture was a significant mediator of subjective well-being for students who were more acculturated, while social connectedness to other Chinese students and Chinese culture was a significant mediator of subjective well-being for students who were more enculturated. Du's definition of subjective well-being is akin to Diener et al.'s (1999) use of the concept, and can be simply put as an individual's evaluation of their life according to their own standards. Acculturation and enculturation were measured using the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA; Ryder et al., 2000), a two-part index that measures an individual's extent of adherence to both home and host culture. The VIA seems potentially useful, although I would suggest that it is limited in that it entails assumptions as to what the domains of import relevant to the acculturation and enculturation processes might be, that are based on concerns particular to the unique configuration of cultures and nationalities implicated in these processes as they happen in Vancouver. These domains include values, social relationships, and adherence to traditions (Ryder et al., 2000). Though these domains likely touch on aspects of the acculturative/enculturative process that are more-or-less ubiquitous across contexts, carefully implemented setting-specific adaptations would enhance its correspondence with the real-world dynamics of a given group's transcultural experience.

A number of these bilinear studies frame social connectedness as the mediator between acculturation/enculturation and subjective well-being (Al-Sharideh and Goe, 1998; Cassel et al., 1960; 1976; Du, 2012; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kagan and Cohen, 1990; Yoon et al., 2008). The trend throughout these studies is to operationalize social connectedness as either (1) the degree to which a person feels like they get along with either host-nationals or co-nationals, or

(2) the amount of time spent socializing with each group. Levels of acculturation and enculturation are often then gauged in terms of cultural competency. Logically, it does seem like these variables would be related. If an individual is spending a lot of time with a culturally unified group of people and getting along well with them, for example, then it makes sense that that individual would be more competent in the context of that cultural group. Furthermore, if a person spends their time socializing with a group of people they get along with, they may reasonably be expected to report higher levels of subjective well-being than someone who spends time socializing within a milieu of people they tend not to agree with. There is precedent in the literature for taking social connectedness with co-nationals to be a greater determinant of subjective well-being than social connectedness with host-nationals (Al-Sharideh and Goe, 1998; Rosenthal et al., 2007). Even if this is sometimes the case, it does not necessarily mean enculturation is more tied to subjective well-being than acculturation. Such a conclusion ignores the possibility that social alignment with co-nationals may entail a normative model of the proper blend of enculturation and acculturation, making the two processes difficult to separate. Again, we have uncovered a space for the notion of an emergent cultural context, unique to each university's population of international students of a given nationality.

Where I break with some of the existing acculturation literature (e.g. Searle and Ward, 1990) is where researchers take the step of separating psychological and social adjustment to a new cultural setting. Pan et al. (2008) perhaps frame their examination of adjustment in the cross-cultural migration process in a more holistic manner. They identify the factor most closely mediating "life satisfaction" (a concept closely related to subjective well-being in the literature) to be "meaning of life", or a person's sense of purpose in life. From the perspective of cognitive anthropology, people assign meaning and purpose to their lives through the use of experientially-

informed, shared cultural models (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Quinn, 2005). Thus, a separation between psychological and sociocultural adjustment seems unwarranted. It seems more likely that the adjustment process, or set of processes, contains both psychological and sociocultural elements which interact in ways that blur the lines between the two related domains of experience. Put simply, the psychological is always sociopsychological. This seems to better capture an overall picture of an individual's well-being; sociocultural and psychological adjustment processes leaving often overlapping marks on the individual. A view such as this, which takes experienced outcomes of mental health to be informed by processes both within and around the brain (the psychological and the sociocultural), takes up Kendler et al.'s (2010) important call for a mechanistic property cluster conceptualization (MPC) of psychiatric disorders, or in this case, simply states of mental well-being. The measurement of subjective well-being then becomes not a search for a primary factor of change or principal component of well-being, but rather a quest to capture the relationships between a multitude of factors at levels within and beyond the individual.

3.2. Measuring Subjective Well-Being

Research on subjective well-being (SWB) in general has advanced prolifically over the course of the last few decades. According to Diener et al. (1999), "Growth in the field of SWB reflects larger societal trends concerning the value of the individual, the importance of subjective views in evaluating life, and the recognition that well-being necessarily includes positive elements that transcend economic prosperity." In the same article, Diener et al. put forth a set of components of subjective well-being. The four major factors the authors identify include pleasant affect, unpleasant affect, life satisfaction, and domain satisfactions (Diener et al., 1999). Joy, elation, contentment, pride, affection, happiness, and ecstasy are provided as subdivisions of

pleasant affect, while guilt, shame, sadness, anxiety, anger, stress, depression, and envy are given as instances of unpleasant affect thus far explored in the literature. Diener et al. additionally detail components of life satisfaction--which include desire to change life, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with past, satisfaction with future, and significant others' views of one's life, as well as components of domain satisfaction--which include work, family, leisure, health, finances, self, and one's group (1999). Lacking are clear definitions of each form of pleasant and unpleasant affect, as well as any delineation of causal relationships between circumstance and SWB factors. Diener et al. admit these shortcomings and emphasize the need for more rigorous and sophisticated methodologies (1999).

From a psychological anthropology perspective--one which emphasizes the role of the sociocultural environment in the way an individual perceives, experiences, and expresses--Diener et al. make the mistake of reducing social relations to a discrete subset of factors in a list. Instead, a better model of subjective well-being would recognize the capacity for social interaction and shared cultural knowledge to, at least in part, shape and inform all of the components of well-being put forth in Diener et al's model. Furthermore, the sociocultural impacts on these components, as well as the components themselves, potentially differ greatly by context. As Christopher (1999) argues, any understanding of psychological well-being engages with notions of morality and is thus cultural. For these reasons, it may be advantageous to assume little, building a contextually-faithful picture of the social elements of subjective well-being from the ground up.

3.3. Models, Schemas, and the Cultural Mind

Despite its increasingly ubiquitous usage in population health studies, the concept of culture is often taken for granted and employed without being clearly defined (Hruschka 2009; Kohrt et al., 2009). Far from trivial, this is deeply problematic, as it becomes difficult to determine if different researchers are evoking the culture concept in the same way. Not only is the working definition of culture an issue on a theoretical level, it also fundamentally configures methodology. One major problem is that there is not an end-all be-all definition of culture, nor are there grounds for one at this point. As Roy D'Andrade famously discusses in the preface of *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (1995), many problems arise when we start to think about what culture is.

What is the problem? The problem is the nature of human culture. One can conceive of a society's culture, in Ward Goodenough's famous phrase, as "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members." Certainly humans do learn an enormous amount of cultural knowledge. The problem comes when one tries to understand what that knowledge *is*. Is it lists of propositions? Organized structures of contrasting attributes? A storehouse of images? A collection of taxonomies? A set of computer-like programs? Is it totally language based, or does it include images and physical skills? (p. xiii)

In other words, if culture seems to be contributing to a phenomenon or set of phenomena, how can it and its effects on individuals be found and measured? Complicating things further, we of course see innumerable personal differences between individuals who may all be supposedly of the same culture. For psychologically-minded anthropologists, culture presents itself not as an external force interacting with the subject, but as a set of processes, symbols, and structures that help constitute and orient the subject in particular ways. It would thus seem that an operating definition of culture capable of tracing its effects on the individual must recognize culture as something that people carry with them that helps them organize the perceivable world. Framed as such, shared cultural knowledge is seen as always present in experience at various levels.

An effort to determine what culture is on an essential level (see Kendler et al., 2010) may go beyond the scope of both this thesis and any research that uses it as a guide. Perhaps a more useful endeavor at this juncture would be to settle upon a practical definition of culture, one which renders the cultural traces left on individuals measurable. For this I turn to Kohrt et al.'s simple definition of culture as "...a system of beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors that are transmitted through social learning" (2009: 230). This shared knowledge is transmitted and stored within the mind of each individual in the form of mental models and schemas (Quinn, 2005), which provide the cultured individual a roadmap with which to interpret the world around them, leaving spaces that each individual must fill out in accord with their own unique experiences. Since each individual holds a unique and intersectional position in relation to the people around them, each will treat the larger community's norms, values, expectations, beliefs, myths, etc. in a different way. Here we can think of culture as a uniquely embodied component of a person's *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1980). Culture provides the socially embedded individual with a set of conceptual tools with which to build models of reality that are partly cultural, partly experiential. These cognitions are both *models* and *modelers*, simultaneously being built by, and building, subjective experience.

The power of this conceptualization of culture has been recognized in the literature, particularly by those interested in the idea that cognitive processes are not able to be fully accounted for through neurobiological explanations alone; that the phenomenological realm entangles processes both in (neurobiological components) and around (contextual components) the human brain. Kirmayer and Sartorius (2007), for example, discuss the phenomena of psychosomatic and sociosomatic looping, which they argue occur when individuals interpret psychic or somatic sensations through the filters of cognitive cultural models, and result in

differences in symptom expression that need to be taken into account nosologically (with regard to psychiatric diagnoses). This idea, I argue, can be extended beyond thinking about psychiatric disorders and diagnoses. A cognitive cultural model of subjective well-being, for instance, may fundamentally direct the cultured individual's attention in relation to their own body and mind. Thus, this idea of looping is potentially insightful when examining the way subjective well-being is experienced among Indian international students.

Having established this working definition of culture, the questions now become methodological in nature. How is one to determine if a given belief, value, norm or behavior is shared? Further, how is one to trace the impact of this shared knowledge on the experience of individuals? It is these concerns to which I will now turn.

3.4. Finding Culture

There is much in the established literature on psychological and subjective well-being that suggests very strongly that conceptions of well-being are culture-laden, and effectively vary to a degree among the world's cultural groups (Christopher, 1999; Diener et al., 2003). However, there are also studies that have found cross-cultural similarities in the determinants psychological of subjective well-being (Chirkov et al., 2003; Diener et al., 2003). In fact, there is no clear consensus in the literature as to which aspects of subjective well-being are informed by an individual's cultural affiliation and which are universal. In the interest of parsimony, it seems reasonable to operate based on the null hypothesis that species-level dynamics of well-being do exist. That said, any study of subjective well-being that takes to heart the idea of grounded theory should seek to understand local conceptions of well-being on their own terms before assuming commonalities with other contexts.

The idea of ‘community’, or ‘social connectedness’, is also evoked frequently in studies of international student health and adjustment (Al-Sharideh and Goe, 1998; Du, 2012; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kagan and Cohen, 1990; Yoon et al., 2008). Often community refers to either the host community within which international students find themselves in their new sociocultural environment, or to the community of fellow co-nationals. Much like the concept of subjective well-being, what constitutes sense of community, or social connectedness, encompasses ideas that may be generalizable in some abstract sense, as well as ideas that vary by culture. In alignment with the principles of grounded theory, researchers concerned with the cultural model of community in a given location should resist assumptions regarding the meanings, dynamics, and significance of the concept of community for the group of interest. Due to the social basis of human life, I argue that an exploration of the culturally-specific domain of community (or the local equivalent of it) is essential to any study of subjective psychological well-being. In the case of international students, this line of thinking is very much supported by the literature (as noted above).

There are two main ways of beginning the process of eliciting localized understandings of subjective well-being and community that I would like to propose. These methods are participant observation and open-ended or loosely structured interviews. The principle underpinning both of these means of cultural interpretation is the idea that minimizing the role of the researcher (and his or her set of assumptions) is the best way to access a culture on its own terms. To begin to understand a particular group of international students’ conceptualization of subjective well-being in this way, a researcher should regularly spend time with members of the group, interacting in informal ways that promote rapport and trust. This might include being present where groups of students are congregating in their down time, as well as for more formal

cultural events. During these ‘hangouts’ the researcher should make an effort to minimize their influence on what happens, which could mean being an active participant or not, depending on the situation. The researcher should look for opportunities to ask questions they may have about the situation. This could involve asking questions to the group and/or meeting with individual members of the group after the fact. While openness is key here, the researcher should maintain cognizance of the ideas they wish to explore and test. Over time, patterns and themes of interest may begin to emerge. These patterns and themes can be brought into the interview context to give more structure to the interview process. The aim in all of this is to fully explore and grasp the complexities of these culturally-laden ideas and mental models.

Here it is important to distinguish between two distinct ways of situating the interviewee within the context of the ethnographic interview. Questions that aim to elicit knowledge shared at the group level put the interviewee in the position of ‘informant’, while questions that invite the interviewee to indicate their personal stance towards something position them as a ‘respondent’ (Levy and Hollan, 1998). Ideally, an interview that hopes to get at the ways culture interacts with experience should employ a combination of these two types of questions.

The next step in the process of understanding the models of subjective well-being and community of a given group of international students, in a way that takes insights from psychological anthropology seriously, is to attempt to “find culture in talk” (Quinn, 2005). This entails transcribing recorded interviews and ‘coding’ them according to recurrent themes and ideas, all in an attempt to uncover people’s culturally-informed schemas of these domains. In line with grounded theory, the aim should be to let codes (which represent recurrent themes and elements of narrative structure) emerge organically (Quinn, 2005). Groleau, Young, and Kirmayer (2006) identify three kinds of culturally-informed mental models they see as

particularly revealing of an individual's cognitive map of health-related experiences: explanatory models, prototypes, and chain-complexes. Having had some experience using these concepts as guides during narrative analysis, I would contend that they are apt tools for understanding not only experiences and conceptualizations of health problems, but of experiences and conceptual models more generally. For example, by being attentive to explanatory models of what it means to be an international student and why, the use of prototypes in making sense of one's own orientation towards finding a balance between acculturation and enculturation, and the construction of chain-complexes which piece together various levels of explanatory modeling and prototypical reasoning, a researcher may best be able to make sense of what shared models might exist, as well as how individuals are differently embodying them.

3.5. Cultural Consensus and Consonance

One useful and practical method for testing whether or not seemingly shared knowledge gleaned from qualitative methods maps onto a population in general, pulls from Cultural Consensus Theory (CCT) (Romney et al., 1986; Romney et al., 1987; Weller, 2007). Based on coded interviews, the researcher(s) compiles a set of statements that reflect emergent themes and ideas within and around the domains of interest (subjective well-being and community for our purposes). These statements can be more-or-less directly pulled from interviewee responses, or simply inferred from these responses even if not explicitly stated. This is also a means of exploring and testing relationships between established codes in the qualitative data, and statements should reflect these hypothesized relationships. It is important that the chosen set of statements be centered around a single topic and of roughly the same difficulty level. In this hypothetical case, since subjective well-being and community constitute two separate domains of

interest, perhaps two sets of statements are suitable. By saying the statements should be of about the same difficulty level, Weller (2007) means that it should be reasonable to expect that an ‘average’ person from the group of interest will be able to indicate the accuracy of each statement in the set. Keep in mind that these statements are, in essence, meant to ‘test’ the models of subjective well-being and community that the researcher has come to through qualitative analysis. Not only this, but responses to these statements can also be used to assess the extent to which each individual aligns with the beliefs and values of the group. For this reason, the series of statements should be compiled into a survey with at least two parts. One of these parts will be asking participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statements as an informant, the other as a respondent. If significantly shared models of subjective well-being and community are shown in the data, each individual’s *consonance* with these shared models can be assessed qualitatively by comparing their responses to the respondent portion of the survey to the set of average, or ‘correct’, responses to the informant portion. Gathering consensus and consonance data simultaneously deviates from the established norm of this kind of research in that usually these measures are done at different times, often involving separate sample groups within a community (Dressler et al., 2005; 2007). Collecting these measures simultaneously, however, may be advantageous for a couple of reasons. First, it eliminates the need for the researcher to locate two separate samples of participants, thus saving time, energy, and resources. Second, having participants respond to survey items focused on their own opinions and values, as well as items focused on their perception of the opinions and values of those around them, may give the analyst a better sense of the ways in which people personally embody the shared sociocultural world they live in. In the formal Cultural Consensus Model, an extra step is taken to correct for guessing (Romney, Batchelder, & Weller 1987). Essentially this

added step uses statistical procedures in order to determine which individuals' answers are most likely a reflection of cultural knowledge rather than guessing, weighing these individuals' answers higher than those of less 'culturally reliable' individuals. Alternatively, the informal Cultural Consensus Model gauges individual responses in relation to the answers of the rest of the group rather than to the 'correct' set of responses (Weller, 2007). It is consonance to this consensus model which is hypothesized to be associated with subjective well-being (Dressler et al., 2005; 2007). If multiple clusters of answers seem to appear, there may be multiple cultural models worth exploring further. If this is the case, it may be informative to compare reported level of subjective well-being according to the model individuals are most in line with.

There is much precedent in the culturally-informed population health literature for causally linking cultural consonance to health outcomes (DeCaro and Worthman, 2008; Dressler et al., 2005; Dressler, 2005; Dressler et al., 2007; McDade, 2002; Balieiro et al., 2011). I argue that these linkages are traceable among international students as well. I hypothesize that the shared model of community for a given group of international students will identify a 'normally valued' level of balance between acculturation and enculturation. Hypothesizing further, I suggest that individuals who fall outside of this normal range may be more likely to experience psychological distress and diminished subjective well-being.

The cultural consensus/consonance approach is an attractive option in terms of validating ethnographic findings. Through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, I argue that researchers can effectively broaden the scope of their ethnographic claims. Population-level statistical analyses are only meaningful when they capture relationships between contextually-salient variables, and ethnography provides a powerful means of accessing them.

Chapter 4 - Methods

4.1. Introduction

This thesis research utilized a mixed methods approach, generally following an ethnographic bookends structure. Initial participant observation and unstructured interviewing began during the spring semester of 2013, which led to 7 recorded and semi-structured interviews during the summer of 2013. This series of interviews informed and helped frame a more structured interview protocol, as well as a new phase of participant observation. During the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014 I conducted roughly 80 hours of participant observation, usually spending time with informants anywhere from one to four times a week for varying amounts of time. I also conducted and recorded 8 in-depth interviews using a structured protocol (with room for ad-hoc questioning) during this time. In April of 2014, I coded and analyzed the interview transcriptions and reviewed field notes, using the themes that emerged to guide the construction of a survey. The survey was distributed in May, 2014, and responses trickled in over the course of the summer. Analysis of quantitative survey data was completed in September and October of 2014, accompanied by another 20 or so hours of participant observation. This last phase of the ethnographic bookend approach allowed for useful feedback on my interpretations of the data.

4.2. Participant Observation

4.2.1. Participant Observation: Data Collection

Hoping to learn something about the everyday reality of Indian international students' cultural adjustment to life at CSU, I conducted roughly 80 hours of participant observation. In general, this consisted of lounging around apartments, sharing conversation and refreshments with Indian students, and just generally "hanging out". In addition, I also attended a number of

events put on by the CSU Indian Students Association (ISA), including a welcome potluck for new students in August of 2013 and ‘India Nite’ later that semester (‘India Nite’ is an evening of Indian food, dance, music, and skits performed by Indian students at CSU for the Fort Collins community). Lastly, I invited or joined groups of students in going to bars and restaurants, fishing on the Poudre river, seeing movies, playing sports, and just generally ‘hanging out’. These experiences spanned from the spring of 2013 through the spring of 2014, and offered a glimpse of many aspects of life as an Indian international student at CSU that were not necessarily explored during interviews.

I generally did not write field notes during actual participant observation sessions, instead opting to record my reflections after-the-fact. There are some benefits as well as drawbacks to doing things this way, both of which deserve consideration. The major disadvantage is that there were many fleeting insights and ideas that I had while in the midst of participant observation that I was unable to capture in my written notes. While I did my best to take good mental notes and then document them once I got to a notebook or a computer, the feeling that some of my unrecorded or forgotten mental notes were key insights lingers. On the other hand, not taking notes while spending time with Indian students kept the interactions feeling casual and natural. While I can only speculate, I suspect that my Indian informants would have been less comfortable with me around had I been jotting notes about everything that was happening while in their presence. Emerson et al. (1995) discuss the difference between taking an “experiential” and a “participating-to-write” approach to participant observation. The priority of the former is to maximize that naturalness of participant observation, while the latter orients the researcher’s attention towards writing at the point of observation. The costs and benefits to each approach are worthy of careful consideration on the part of any researcher, but the best approach may

ultimately be whichever one is more comfortable for the researcher or necessitated by the nature of the research setting. Drawbacks and advantages considered, I feel my “experiential”, post-interaction approach to taking field notes was effective for the purposes of this study.

My basic approach during sessions of participant observation was very hands-off. There were no attempts to steer or concoct the situations I found myself in while spending time with informants. I made an effort to forget that I was doing participant observation per se, and instead tried to simply be a very present participant in what was going on around me. I made mental notes to be sure, but tried not to linger on them at the expense of missing whatever might happen next. Taking this approach may have prevented me from becoming too distant during periods of participant observation, but it also made the process of writing my thoughts down immediately after leaving a participant observation session even more crucial.

4.2.2. Participant Observation: Data Analysis

As with all ethnographically oriented research in the social sciences, field notes were an essential source of data for this study. Field notes were crucial for this research in two ways: they provided a medium for reflection during the activity of fieldwork itself, and they were key instruments in the post-fieldwork interpretation and analysis of my data. The process of writing field notes while in the midst of fieldwork forced me to articulate my thoughts on what I was observing. This practice kept me focused on the research and got my interpretive and analytical juices flowing. I was still a good ways off from writing the finished thesis during this stage of fieldwork, which allowed me to safely entertain various thoughts and ideas I was having about what I was observing. While not all of these ideas stood the test of time, they were often essential steps in arriving at better-informed and more nuanced interpretations. During post-fieldwork analysis, field notes served as useful memory triggers. Sometimes going back and reading field

notes would remind me of something I had forgotten, other times it would reiterate ideas I already held firmly. All in all, the many hours of participant observation, along with the field notes they were accompanied by, were rich sources of data for this research.

4.3. Interviews

4.3.1. Interviews: Data Collection

Two rounds of interviews were conducted for this study. The first round, completed over the summer of 2013, consisted of 7 essentially open-ended interviews with 4 male Indian graduate student informants. The second round of interviews, conducted in the fall of 2013 and into the spring of 2014, followed a much more structured protocol, developed in the wake of participant observation and the first round of interviews. Both series of interviews were recorded for subsequent transcription. The second round of 9 interviews with 8 different informants (6 male and 2 female) marked the beginning of the explicit research focus on the relationship between adjustment and subjective well-being. Though this relationship was touched on throughout the first round of interviews and present in various ways during participant observation, the interview protocol followed for these last 8 interviews focused more acutely on subjective well-being and cultural adjustment.

Briefly, I want to touch on the gender make-up of my interviewees. Of 12 informants, only two were female. This discrepancy was not by design, and a more even split between male and female informants would have been ideal. Though a completely even split would not be a representative sample of the Indian student population at CSU, I suspect that, largely due to the gender dynamics I will discuss in Chapter 5, more interviews with female Indian students would

have revealed some important differences in the way males and females approach the adjustment process.

The initial research focus going into the first round of interviews was loosely on the potential relationship between Internet habits and subjective well-being. Though that line of inquiry is indeed a valuable one, I began to realize that it was not the most relevant one to the context I was beginning to explore. The Indian students I was talking to were indeed using the Internet in interesting ways that seemed to impact subjective well-being, but this usage seemed to be part of a more general process of adjusting to, and achieving subjective well-being in Fort Collins. It was an interest in this larger process that came to guide this thesis research.

The second round of interviews consisted of 1-2 hour interviews with 9 different informants (One of the interviews involved two participants). These interviews followed a detailed protocol (see Appendix), which was supplemented by ad-hoc questioning based on in-the-moment reactions and thoughts.

4.3.2. Interviews: Data Analysis

Transcriptions of the 15 recorded interviews were made in January of 2014, with analysis beginning shortly thereafter. The transcription process itself, though time-consuming, was an invaluable component of qualitative analysis. Slowly listening back to the interviews and having to type (and therefore think about) what I heard, gave me the opportunity to start mentally churning through key phrases and narratives. By the time the transcriptions were complete and I was preparing to really start trying to make sense of them, I already felt fairly familiar with the content of the interviews. Based on my experience, I sympathize with Ryan and Bernard (2003), who argue that the transcription process is where qualitative analysis begins for taped interviews.

The process of making sense of the interview content (*coding* the interviews) was guided by Strauss and Corbin's (2000) approach, which can be roughly considered 'grounded theory' (I discuss the theory behind this approach in chapter 3). I roughly followed Strauss and Corbin's coding blueprint by starting with *open* coding, moving to *axial* coding, and then doing a final round of *selective* coding (Strauss and Corbin, 2000).

I began by printing copies of all the interview transcripts, reading them through and making initial markings of sections or phrases that stood out in any way. I read through each interview twice in this way, making a fresh draft of notes and markings each time. These steps heed Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) call to read through transcriptions at least twice before coding, as well as Sandelowski's (1995) argument that reading through and underlining key phrases is the first step in textual analysis. Through this process, I arrived at a basic coding schematic that would serve as a starting point for the next step of the coding process. Despite many changes and fine-tunings, this core schematic remained the backbone of the coding system.

The cardinal themes in my coding schematic were *acculturation*, *enculturation*, and *subjective well-being*. Rather than being strictly from the top down or the ground up, these main analytical pillars reflect emergent themes in my informants' narratives as well as themes visited in the body of literature this research responds and adds to. Branching off from each of these overarching themes are "sub-themes", which deal with more specific problems, concerns, values, experiences, etc., that relate to the three main themes in various ways. My concern with the space between cultural expectations and personal conduct led me to insert a dichotomous classification between *expectations* and *actions* into each of my main themes. For instance, if an informant was talking about the importance of getting to know Americans during one's time as a student at CSU I would code it as *acculturation/expectation*, whereas I would code a statement where

someone is stating that they felt like their own experiences with Americans helped them in their adjustment process as *acculturation/action*. The difference between these statements is that, in the first, the student generalizes his or her value statement to the entire Indian student community at CSU, while the second statement seems to be limited to their own experience. While it could be true that a statement about what one finds best for themselves is also an implicit statement of what is best for all, I did not take this leap in my analysis for fear of undue speculation. The breakdown between *enculturation/expectation* and *enculturation/action*, and between *subjective well-being/expectation* and *subjective well-being/action*, followed the same logic. The majority of the coded segments to which I gave analytical import fell broadly under one or more of these six categories, and was likely also categorized into a more specific code based on the contents of the segment.

Next, I coded and analyzed the interviews using MAXQDA software. The reasons to use MAXQDA, as opposed to further coding by hand, are numerous, but the primary analytical advantages are the ease of adding to or editing coding systems and the ability to search through and analyze the collection of interviews as one document. These tools enabled me to better wrap my head around some of the patterns in the data. For instance, I would often search key phrases or words that seemed to be repeated during a particular interview or throughout the entire body of interviews, noting what kinds of questions, triggers, or trains of thought seemed to be leading to and resulting from these repeated sequences. The insight arrived at through being attentive to repetition in a narrative or text is in some ways a bit obvious, and is well recognized in the literature (D'Andrade, 1991; Ryan and Bernard, 2003) After settling on a final coding scheme and finalizing it all on MAXQDA, I was ready to start constructing a survey to test my qualitative interpretations.

4.4. Survey

4.4.1. Survey Construction and Data Collection

The survey (see Appendix) was comprised of four main sections: demographic/background information, informant-oriented items, respondent-oriented items, and assessment of subjective well-being. The items (statements and questions) in the informant-oriented and respondent-oriented sections were identical apart from the way they positioned the participant. For example, an item in the informant-oriented section might use a phrase like, "...Indian students at CSU...", to indicate whom the participant is to answer on behalf of, while an item in the respondent-oriented section might instead be directed toward "...you personally...". There were 51 total items on the survey, and participants generally reported spending about 25 minutes on it. I used a service on fluidsurveys.com to format and distribute the survey. I emailed a cover letter and a link to the survey to each of the students I had interviewed, and then asked them for the email addresses of friends who might also be willing to take the survey. By the end of the survey collection, 12 Indian students had filled out a survey, allowing for a somewhat modest array of statistical tests and analyses.

Finding effective ways to distribute my survey to Indian international students proved to be a more difficult task than I had anticipated. In order to ensure anonymity among survey-takers, I had to email each student participant the link to the online survey separately. For starters, I sent an invite to all of the students I interviewed, since I already had their email addresses. I also encouraged these students to pass the word on about the survey, hoping that the email addresses of interested students would get back to me. This method was only marginally effective. Next, I tried (to no avail) to get one of my informants to post a blurb on my behalf to

the wall of the closed ISA Facebook group. When it became clear that this method was not going to pan out either, I decided to take a more direct approach. At the beginning of the Fall semester of 2014, I spent parts of three days roaming around CSU's campus approaching students I suspected were from India. Generally, I would start by asking the student, "Are you an international student?" If they were, I would then ask them where they were from. If they were not in fact from India, I would explain why I was asking them these questions and wish them a nice day. If they were from India, I would briefly explain my project and ask if they would be interested in taking a brief survey about their experience at CSU. If they said yes, I sent them a link to the survey, along with a cover letter detailing the project and their rights as a participant. This method proved very effective at getting Indian students' email addresses, however only a few of the students who I emailed decided to take the survey. Though I had hoped for a larger sample, I eventually proceeded with quantitative analysis despite a small sample size of 12. Though less than ideal, my sample of 12 still enabled me to test for a consensus model of adjustment, as consensus analysis can be carried out even within a group as small as two members.

4.4.2. Survey: Data Analysis

Once the surveys were completed, I organized the data by creating an excel spreadsheet. The data was then inputted into UCINET, a statistical computer program that could analyze participants' answers to my survey items in order to determine if a *consensus* existed among my informants with regards to ideas of how to properly adjust to life as an Indian international student at CSU. Additionally, UCINET assigned a *competence* score to each participant (i.e. a number between 0 and 1; 0 = complete incompetence, 1 = complete competence). This score constitutes a key variable in this study, which seeks to determine the nature of the interaction

between subjective well-being and the embodiment of cultural models. Individuals with lower competence scores can be generally expected to also have lower *consonance* scores.

The dependent variable in my analyses was subjective well-being. Given the psycho-cultural thrust and specific aims of the study, the crucial test of significance was between consonance score and self-reported subjective well-being. For the sake of analytical ease, I assigned each participant a subjective well-being score based on his or her responses to the eight survey items meant to measure various aspects of subjective well-being that seemed especially important based on the interviews and participant observation (see Appendix). Four of these well-being items asked respondents to rate some aspect of their well-being on a scale of 1-10, with 1 at the low end of the spectrum and 10 at the high end. The other four items were statements that reflected different aspects of positive subjective well-being that were evident in interview and participant observation data. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a scale of 1-6, the degree to which they agreed (options 4-6) or disagreed (options 1-3) with each statement. By totaling the values of these responses, each participant is assigned a subjective well-being score on a scale from 1 to 64. Though measuring subjective well-being in this way produces an efficient quantification of the dependent variable, making analysis fairly straightforward, this score clearly represents a very rough estimation of a the status of subjective well-being an Indian student at CSU might actually be experiencing. In the context of this research, this limitation is largely necessitated by time and resource limitations. In the context of subjective well-being research in general, this limitation may indeed be unavoidable. A person's state of subjective well-being, or satisfaction with life, or overall happiness level, is the ongoing product of such a multitude of factors that it may simply be impossible to encapsulate as a single variable. From

this underlying issue stem a multitude of ideas in the literature on how best to account for all of the factors that impact subjective well-being (see Ch. 3).

I conducted t-tests using a number of independent variables, often recoding data in order to compare subjective well-being scores between respondents who had any level of agreement, and those with any level of disagreement with a given item. This exercise yielded some of the most striking results of the study, as drastically different subjective well-being outcomes between groups held statistical significance despite a small sample size. These results will be considered in Chapter 5.

4.5. Ethnographic Follow-up

The last step in my research process was to run some of the ideas and themes I was seeing in the data by some of my Indian informants. This step was important in that it gave me a chance to bounce ideas around before beginning the writing process. One key insight that I arrived at through this process was that there is a perception among many Indian students that it is more possible than ever to find a quality job utilizing one's professional and academic training. This came up as a topic of discussion when I mentioned to a pair of survey participants that it seemed like most Indian international students intended to return to India after their time abroad. One of the participants said that he agreed with my assessment, but that this trend has only really become widespread within the last 5 years or so. Interestingly, this particular informant touched on something I heard frequently (though not universally) from my Indian informants; he mentioned that Indians are realizing that there are now many jobs in India that can provide comfortable wages to qualified candidates. According to him, the perception before was that Indians with advanced degrees had to either stay in the United States, receiving ample

compensation to perform the work they had been trained to be experts in but also living far from family, friends, and familiarity, or move back to India and be near friends, family, and familiarity, but have difficulty finding a decent job. Insights such as this highlight the utility of running my data (and ideas about how to interpret it) by some of the Indian students I had contact with.

4.6. Conclusion

The mixed methods employed in this thesis research provided the fertile soil necessary for a robust data set that was ripe for analytical plucking. By moving from an open-ended, ground-up ethnographic approach, to a more structured ethnographic phase, then on to a quantitative approach via the survey, and finally coming full circle through ethnographic verification, the results of this thesis research are able to provide a rich and textured picture of the dynamics of adjustment and well-being within the Indian international student community at CSU. Through extended participant observation I was able to build trust with a number of Indian students, fostering greater rapport during interviews, which helped to provide the rich narratives that were crucial in the construction of a meaningful and effective survey. This familiarity also aided me greatly during data analysis by providing me a sense of context when interpreting field notes, statements, and survey results.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In order to make sense of all of the data accumulated during this study, I have decided to focus on major themes that emerged during the course of research and analysis. This chapter will start with a discussion of subjective well-being as understood by the Indian students I spent time with, interviewed, and surveyed at CSU. I will then present the major themes of adjustment to life as an Indian student at CSU, all of which relate back to their subjective well-being. In light of the complementary nature of the qualitative and quantitative components of this research, both types of data will be brought into the discussion of a theme whenever possible. Throughout this chapter, all informants have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

Through the use of the use of participant observation, interviews, and a survey, I uncovered what I argue is a culturally salient model of *adjustment* to life as an Indian international student at CSU. This adjustment model is directly involved in the structuring of subjective well-being among Indian students (which is itself culturally shaped and shared). Here I use the term “model” to refer to a sort of cognitive blueprint that reflects culturally-shared values and frames individuals’ perceptions and actions in a particular way (Quinn, 2005). Cultural models present simplified versions of real-life situations, conveying a loose guide for handling them that requires individuals to do the work of filling in the gaps according to their unique circumstances (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Importantly, the cultural model I have sketched out in this research is one of *adjustment*, not *how to adjust*. This distinction is crucial because it says something very interesting about the possibilities of adjustment for Indian international students at CSU, namely that though there may be a shared model of what adjustment *looks like*, Indian students take many different approaches to realizing this adjustment model. In essence,

Indian international students at CSU pursue a cultural model of adjustment in ways that concord with their values (which are shared to some extent) and experience, in the process also effectively pursuing a cultural model of subjective well-being that, in this context, is largely patterned by the adjustment model.

5.2 - Subjective Well-being

Happiness is like...I don't know how to explain this...I'll just say the same thing. It's like keeping your friends and family close and doing what you like. That's happiness. Lots of people find it funny, why is earning money not happiness? But that's just a manmade thing, money. It won't give you real happiness, like from inside. [Amit, October 12, 2013]

For me happiness is, if I want something and I am trying to achieve it, I am happy. I don't care whether I've got it or not. As long as I am trying for it I'll be happy. If I get it, obviously I will be happy. But I guess I'm saying that achieving something, or the chase to achieving something also makes me happy. [Manu, October 29, 2013]

Ok happiness is a bit different. Happiness is when, I can define when I think a person is happy, see when you wake up and you think oh this is a great day ahead. That is when you are actually happy, isn't it? When you are thinking, oh this has to be done, then you are not happy. But happiness is basically when you are satisfied with all the spheres of your life. When you are satisfied emotionally, satisfied socially, and satisfied professionally. And the weightages might differ from person to person. [Anil, October 27, 2013]

During the interview process, I sought to elicit an emic understanding of subjective well-being from my informants. What I found was that achieving a state of positive subjective well-being was strongly tied to my informants' notions of "success", "happiness", and "being content". These states were not achieved by chance or good fortune, but through concerted efforts to strike a balance between various aspects of life, such as the pursuit of academic and professional goals, meeting the expectations of friends and family, and having a satisfying social life. Though ideas about what the ideal balance looked like varied, the idea of balance was an emergent theme (see Figure 5.1 below).

5.2.1 - Balance

For many, academic and professional success seemed to be especially important components of subjective well-being. Given the fact that all of my informants were in their mid-twenties and living halfway around the world, away from their lives and families back in India, for the purpose of obtaining an advanced degree, this makes a lot of sense. This of course did not mean that academic and professional success was seen as *the* key to happiness, but rather that it temporarily occupied a higher place on the “hierarchy” of well-being for many of the Indian students I spoke with.

Me: What is your top priority in life?

Anil: As of now it's work. Maybe someday when, you know, see I am already miles away from my family. So if family was my top priority I would not have been here anyway. So as of now, my top priority is work. Excellence at workplace. That's it. That is what is to be achieved, so, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, festivals, it does not matter even a single bit. Although, there is a compromise to be made. There was a time in life when I really worked extremely hard and it led to a burnout. You have to have other things as well. To balance things out. Every machine needs to be cooled. You can't just go on like, I'll study every day, I'll do this, and that. From whatever I have learned from my experiences, as long as you are doing the right thing at the right time, you are good. So if you have to study and you are partying, that's not good, but if you have some time, you have some window, and you want to just get a load off your mind and have some of your social life and you go for a party, that's alright. [Anil, October 27, 2013]

Anil's comments reflect the notion of balance as the key to well-being. While he emphasizes the value of dedication and hard work, he also notes the importance of leaving space in life for enjoyment and relaxation. At another point in the interview from which the above excerpt was pulled, Anil positively evaluates the way Americans study, commenting that when they are studying they are “properly studying”, enabling them to relax and recuperate when they finish. He contrasts this approach to studying with the way he used to study in India, which he describes as more-or-less an ongoing activity interspersed with frequent breaks and distractions.

For Anil, the “Indian” way of studying seems to be characterized by a relative lack of balance; even if frequent breaks are taken, the work that must be done is a constant presence in the mind of the studier. The “American” approach to studying, in contrast, allows for a clearer separation of studying and relaxing. If one “properly” studies for a chunk of time, they can then afford to fully relax, “making their mind fresh” in the process. Though he said he had not completely adapted to this way of studying at the time of the interview, he expressed a desire to do so and clearly saw it as a way to achieve better balance in his life. Anil’s adoption of an American approach to studying reflects the pursuit of a model of adjustment that is shaped by the culturally held notion of balance as a key component of subjective well-being. While not every Indian international student would navigate this situation in this exact way, decisions such as how and when to study, socialize, work, etc., are made in a way that reflect one’s own ideas (the product of a negotiation between cultural knowledge and individual lived experience) regarding how to attain a culturally valued state of balance.

Balance was not only an important value for the practical reason of keeping one’s mind fresh during the grind of schoolwork, but also because achieving a relative balance between work and leisure activities was seen as the way to get the most from the experience of living in Fort Collins. Multiple informants expressed their desire to “learn a new culture”, and to experience a sense of life in America that went beyond the academic realm. Academic goals did seem to be valued above all else, but a great deal of importance was also placed on having a well-rounded American experience. Additionally, some of the emphasis on having a well-rounded experience was derived from the idea that doing so would help prevent students from getting burnt out from their academic responsibilities.

Figure 5.1 shows the results of a t-test comparing the difference in mean subjective well-being scores between those in the survey sample who responded with some level of agreement (Group 0), and those who responded with some level of disagreement (Group 1), to the survey item, “At the moment, all the important things in my life are well-balanced” (see Appendix for full survey). The mean subjective well-being score of those who agreed with the statement was 16.5 points higher than for those who disagreed (95% confidence interval of difference = 7.76 to 25.24). These results highlight the salience of life-balance as a crucially affective component of subjective well-being for Indian international students at CSU.

Figure 5.1 – T-test comparing difference in mean subjective well-being score between respondents with some degree of disagreement (Group 0) and some degree of agreement (Group 1) with the following statement: “At the moment, all the important things in my life are well-balanced.”

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. ttest swbscore3, by (wbbalr)
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Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
0	4	27.75	3.68273	7.36546	16.02991	39.47009
1	8	44.25	2.102295	5.946187	39.27886	49.22114
combined	12	38.75	2.933932	10.16344	32.29246	45.20754
diff		-16.5	3.922292		-25.23941	-7.760589

diff = mean(0) - mean(1) t = -4.2067
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 10

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0009 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0018 Pr(T > t) = 0.9991

(Groups: 0 = Completely disagree, Mostly disagree, or Slightly disagree to the statement; 1 = Completely agree, Mostly agree, Slightly agree)

5.2.2 - Communication

In addition to achieving balance in life, the ability to express one’s self and communicate effectively with others was also seemingly tied to subjective well-being for my informants.

Because of the fact that the Indian students at CSU come from various regions in India, thus speaking a wide variety of languages, communication was a major recurring theme in this study.

I will dive more deeply into the issues of regionalism and language differences below, but both of these themes are tied to the communication aspect of subjective well-being among Indian students at CSU.

Perhaps the most striking line of evidence for the importance of communication in relation to subjective well-being comes from the survey data. One of the survey items asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the statement, “People understand me, and I am able to express myself”. Using a 1-6 likert scale, respondents were asked to choose one of the following options: completely disagree, mostly disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, mostly agree, and completely agree. Of the 12 respondents, 3 chose one of the three degrees of disagreement, while 9 chose one of the three degrees of agreement. When I divided the respondents in this way and compared their mean subjective well-being scores I found a clear pattern: the average score for the respondents who disagreed with the statement to any degree was about 24 (out of 48), while the average score for respondents who agreed with the statement to any degree was about 42. Though these are small sample sizes, the difference in means is striking.

Figure 5.2 – T-test comparing difference in mean subjective well-being score between respondents with some degree of disagreement (Group 0) and some degree of agreement (Group 1) with the following statement: “People understand me, and I am able to express myself.”

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. ttest swbscore4, by (wbexpr)
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Two-sample t test with equal variances

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
0	3	24.33333	3.480102	6.027714	9.359662	39.307
1	9	42.44444	2.316074	6.948221	37.10357	47.78532
combined	12	37.91667	3.011237	10.43123	31.28898	44.54436
diff		-18.11111	4.516089		-28.17358	-8.048637

```
diff = mean(0) - mean(1)          t = -4.0104
Ho: diff = 0                      degrees of freedom = 10
```

```
Ha: diff < 0                      Ha: diff != 0                      Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 0.0012                 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0025                 Pr(T > t) = 0.9988
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(Groups: 0 = Completely disagree, Mostly disagree, or Slightly disagree to the statement; 1 = Completely agree, Mostly agree, Slightly agree)

Balance in life and effective communication were the two aspects of subjective well-being that seemed to weigh the heaviest for my informants. That is not to say that only these two aspects of life mattered in the process of achieving subjective well-being, only that they were the most readily apparent in my research. In fact, I would argue that the pursuit of subjective well-being is an incredibly complex process that is impossible to truly capture, no matter how many variables one attempts to identify. Nonetheless, my aim in this study has been to arrive at an understanding of the subjective well-being of Indian students at CSU that captures at the very least a fragment of the lived experience of the process of adjusting to and achieving wellness in Fort Collins. The remainder of this chapter will explore elements of life as an Indian international student at CSU that come to bear on the process of attaining positive subjective well-being.

5.3 - The Middle Path

The differences between life in India and life in the United States that my Indian informants spoke of ranged from very minor to profound. While it became clear early on that the

students' experiences of adjustment and acculturation were highly subjective, there were nonetheless a number of common experiences and themes that showed up across their narratives. These adjustments seemed relatively easy for some, while extremely difficult for others. Every one of the students I interviewed expressed that it took time to get used to the ways in which their lives had changed upon arrival in Fort Collins. For many, the adjustment was initially uncomfortable or difficult and had to happen over time. For others, the process was easy at first but over time they found themselves experiencing various difficulties. For all, it was an ongoing process that required a certain combination of self-reflection, self-control, and willingness to make changes. In this section of the chapter I will discuss various elements of this process that stood out in my research.

Perhaps the central theme that emerged from my research was the idea that adjustment to life in Fort Collins meant some degree of adaptation was necessary, but that this adaptation should only go so far. In other words, Indian students at CSU recognized the importance of learning to function within their new cultural setting, but at the same time valued and actively maintained their Indian identities. The ideal balance, or "middle path", varied from person to person, contouring to each student's situation. Yet across the variation, a common concern with embracing a certain amount of change while also fostering a certain amount of "Indian-ness" was present.

But then everybody has their own background, right, you know, so I'm from India, I'm in US, but I can't totally convert myself into an American. I should not forget my culture, I should not forget my Indian history or whatever it is. So yea, I have to have that in my mind, you know, I have to be an Indian, live in America, you know mingle with Americans, try to learn a new culture, but not forget my culture. [Sagun – Oct. 9, 2013]

Other students echoed Sagun's narrative in various ways. One specific example that I came across while doing participant observation with a group of male Indian students was the

desire to check out the bar scene in Fort Collins. The underlying reasons for this desire seemed to be to experience an aspect of American culture that differed markedly from Indian culture, as well as to have the opportunity to interact with the opposite sex in a way that simply was not seen as an option in India. Importantly, this group of students did not seem to feel very comfortable with the idea of bar-hopping without an American accomplice. They told me this was because they felt they wouldn't be able to get as much from the experience if they went alone. From what I could tell, this discomfort would have been two-fold. Not only would it have been uncomfortable to be in such an unfamiliar setting without someone providing insight and local knowledge, but going out to bars for the purpose of mingling with members of the opposite sex may have garnered unwanted negative judgments from fellow Indian students. There was something about being with Americans that seemed to make that kind of exploration more acceptable. The following interview excerpt touches on this idea of being careful about one's approach to dealing with some of the newfound freedoms and opportunities that Indian students might encounter in Fort Collins.

I think people misuse their freedom a lot after coming here. Like in India they wouldn't do such things, but after coming here they get that freedom and get involved in some things which are not, which would go against our culture or whatever. [Dhita – March 19, 2014]

The fear of receiving criticism from fellow Indian students for “misusing” the freedoms associated with being in the United States was certainly a factor in decision-making for many, though not all, of the Indian students I interacted with. It would, however, be inaccurate to imply that all Indian students at CSU fear this criticism, or that it was simply the fear of criticism (as opposed to an embodiment of the values inherent to the criticism) that kept Indian students from “misusing” the perceived freedoms of life in the United States. In fact, though the way they

would be perceived by their Indian peers was a factor, I argue that decision-making with regards to the perhaps unfamiliar freedoms of life in Fort Collins was predominantly guided by an embodied notion of self, arrived at via the twenty-some-odd years of life each student arrived in the United States with. This notion of self is the result of an ongoing process, and it was surely impacted by the circumstances faced in Fort Collins. These circumstances included opportunities for new experiences, as well as the thoughts and values of the Indian student community at CSU. It is this process of navigation that characterizes the “middle path” between adapting to American culture and staying connected to Indian culture.

The idea of balancing between “learning a new culture” and remembering Indian culture was also reflected in the survey data gathered for this study. The questions, “How often should Indian students socialize with other Indians?”, and “How often should Indian students socialize with Americans?”, with the multiple choice options of (i) every day, (ii) most days, (iii) sometimes, and (iv) rarely or never, both garnered mostly responses of every day and most days (66% between the two questions combined), and zero responses of rarely or never. Interestingly, respondents tended to indicate that they personally spent more time with Indian students than the amount of time they felt most other Indian students should.

The intent to return to India following completion of one’s degree was an essential element of the model of adjustment for virtually all of the Indian students I interviewed and surveyed. Some conveyed to me that this sweeping trend might be stronger than it has been in the recent past. Their perception was that this is due to the growth of, and increasing sense of confidence in, the Indian economy. While there are likely to be higher-paying engineering, biotech, computer sciences, etc. jobs in the United States, almost all students I talked to expressed an intention to return to India. The pull of familiarity, family, and friends, along with

the fact that lower pay rates in India are also accompanied by a lower cost of living, is enough to outweigh the prospect of more lucrative positions in the United States for most Indian internationals at CSU.

Though most Indian students at CSU who participated in this research shared the desire to return to India, their ideas about the timeline of their return varied. By and large, the general blueprint seemed to be to find a job in the United States for a few years after graduating from CSU in order to repay student loans before making the move back to India. Seemingly economic in nature, the basis for this trend at first glance may seem at odds with the idea of forgoing higher pay for the duration of one's career in order to return to India eventually. Upon reflection, however, I am inclined to see the decision to stay in the United States until student loans are erased as a practical step, in line with the value system from which the desire to return to India stems. By paying back loans before returning to India, living in India becomes more feasible in the long term. This is a value system that seems to recognize the importance of making a living, yet emphasizes foremost the importance of being around close family and friends.

My attempts to identify a cultural model of how to follow the "middle path" via survey construction and consensus analysis were unsuccessful. Based on this result and my interpretations of qualitative data, there appears to be no culturally delineated set of "correct" decisions pertaining to the process of adjustment. That said, the data does indicate that Indian students at CSU share a rough picture of what it means to be well-adjusted. This rough picture, which especially emphasizes healthy life-balance and satisfying communication with others, structures the parameters of subjective well-being for Indian students. The pursuit of adjustment can be said to overlap significantly with the pursuit of subjective well-being for Indian international students at CSU.

5.4 - Gender

One variable of adjustment to life in Fort Collins that stood out in my research was that of gender. Many informants spoke of the differences between gender dynamics in India as compared to the United States, and these differences appeared to be at play in the process of adjusting (or finding the middle path). Informants attested to a variety of ways in which the expectations, possibilities, and limitations experienced by Indian guys differed from those experienced by Indian girls.

Back in India if you had asked me I would say there would be a whole lot of difference between the experiences we have because the parents obviously are not too open about their daughters being late outside or hanging out with a lot of guys or something like that. They would put on a lot of restrictions of us and if you have a brother you could notice the differences. Like, he is allowed to be out late at night, he can party, he can hang out as much as he wants. But a girl, they wouldn't allow this. It would be like, it's 7 so you have to be back before the sunset. It's not safe for a girl to be out, a lot of things. But here I think both of them get equal freedom. So I think girls are also taking full advantage of it. Guys are guys. They obviously had it (freedom?) in India, maybe on a little lower level but yea. I think it's the same. But it depends how a girl is raised. If she is not comfortable-like my roommates wouldn't go out, they wouldn't party as much. [Dhita – March 19, 2014]

The differences Dhita speaks of are not completely lost upon arrival in Fort Collins.

Though Indian students at CSU are half a world away from India, many aspects of the gendered worldview they were accustomed to in India remain. These differing constraints and expectations were perhaps most clearly identified within the arena of romance. The following is an exchange between a male informant and myself.

S: It depends on the person, yea. And again, you know, girls they have their roommates so, again, it's like a girl might want to hang out with an American guy maybe, but then she has her roommates, she might not, she might hesitate.

Me: Because her roommates might look at her differently?

S: Yea.

Me: Sure. What about if an Indian, like one of your roommates, or you, wanted to hang out with an American girl, do you think...

S: They would just encourage me.
[Sagun – October 9, 2013]

In this exchange we can see clearly the influence of others' perceptions (in this case other Indians) on the process of navigating the landscape of opportunities and freedoms that living in the United States entails. In this instance (and I would argue in general), one's roommates appear to be highly influential. Sagun's answers in this exchange also hint at the existence of very different sets of expectations for male and female Indian students. As the following excerpts from the same interview highlight, however, the expectations which help guide some of the decision-making of CSU's Indian students are not limited to those of roommates; for some, the expectations of the Indian student community at-large may be a constant presence.

No, it's just because the Indian culture, you know, it's very conservative, people are very conservative, and then again girls, Indian girls are very conservative. They don't try to come out of their comfort zone. And one more thing, like even Indian boys, an Indian boy would not expect a girl to come out of her comfort zone, and then you know, be like, how do I say, an extrinsic American girl.

Later in the interview:

So if the girl is too extrovert kind of person, and she's an Indian, we might not like that kind of attitude, because at the end of the day she is an Indian, that's what we think. Personally I wouldn't care, yea. [Sagun – October 9, 2013]

Sagun makes a clear distinction between American and Indian girls; one that, from his perspective, is widely recognized within the Indian student community at CSU. The prototypical Indian girl, according to Sagun, is conservative and quiet, while a prototypical American girl is liberal and outgoing. Also present in these excerpts, is a sort of ambivalence regarding Sagun's feelings about Indian girls potentially becoming more extroverted in the United States. He states

that he would not care, but also uses “we” when relaying his sense of the Indian student community’s stance on the matter, which he suggests might not be supportive of too much extroversion. Indeed, this bit of Sagun’s narrative may capture a microcosm of the ongoing process of finding what I’m calling the “middle path” between acculturation and enculturation. It is perhaps pertinent that at the time of our interview, Sagun had been in Fort Collins for less than two months. Though navigating the middle path seemed to require ongoing work, it seems plausible that the first semester could entail a considerable level of uncertainty and exploration.

For Dhita and Sagun, as well as a number of other informants, there is an acknowledgement of the differing sets of expectations associated with the two genders. These expectations, though not completely deterministic, are key to making sense of the dynamics of adjustment at play for male and female Indian students at CSU. In pursuing the closely related cultural models of adjustment and well-being, individuals are aware of the Indian student community’s ideas and expectations that accompany their gender, and this awareness helps shape the way they attempt to realize these models.

5.5. Region and Language

Every Indian student I talked to told me that the collection of Indians at CSU was very diverse in terms of regional origin in India. Along with this diversity come differences in language, religion, and other elements of culture. Of these elements, language was what my informants seemed to bring up the most. Some could speak three or four languages (usually English, Hindi, and a regional language or two) and could switch with relative ease based on whom they were conversing with. Others spoke only two languages (English and Hindi or

English and a regional language) and found it challenging to communicate with others when around groups of students with different linguistic backgrounds.

I became very eccentric the moment I came here because everything these guys do is different from the way it's done in my place. I am not very 'at-home' with those guys either. Let me tell you something: compared to Hyderabadis, it is easier to talk to Americans. That's the truth. Because people from Hyderabad, even their English has an accent. They don't word, they say wordra. So it's much easier to talk to an American than a Hyderabad person. So that is why I become a bit secluded. Because I can't speak in Telugu--which is their language. So it just kind of, I kind of differ from other people because I am from a very different environment than those guys, although I lived in Hyderabad as well. Even when I was there I couldn't understand anything they said. [Anil - October 27, 2013]

So I speak three Indian languages. So if I am speaking to a person from my state I speak in Telgu, so if I'm speaking to a North Indian I speak in Hindi, and If I'm speaking to any other South Indian, for example Tamilian, I speak in Tamil. [Sagun – October 9, 2013]

In order to address the language issue, many informants told me they prefer to use a common language when in mixed groups. While almost all interviewees personally agreed that a common language was ideal in mixed groups, many reported that this was not the norm among Indians at CSU.

For some Indian students, language differences had a big impact on their interactions with other Indians. Though as I mentioned, I was told frequently than most, if not all, Indians were able to speak at least two or three languages (regional language, Hindi, and English), I was also told by many that, when possible, most Indian students preferred to speak in a shared regional language. While this in itself was never criticized, a few informants lamented about the experience of being the only one in a group who could not speak the regional language the others were conversing in. Anil, being the only Indian student on campus from his home state in north India, was particularly affected by this occurrence.

Those are the two most dominant sort of societies within the Indian student population here--the Maharshtans and the people from Andhra Pradesh. There are language issues as well. So I am from a Hindi-speaking region and I don't know my own native language-

-I know Hindi and I know English--but the thing is that, for Hyderabadis it is more or less the case, if two people are sitting there and I am the third person sitting there, they aren't going to care if I understand or not. So basically most of the time I am an outsider. And same goes with Maharashtrian people. Some of them do understand the fact that I don't understand what they are speaking, so they will change their language. I would say 7 out of 10 people will know it. [Anil - October 27, 2013]

Anil clearly makes a connection between his regional and linguistic background, and his feelings of being an “outsider”. It is worth taking a moment to reflect on the use of the term “outsider” in this context. For Anil—a twenty-something year-old Indian international student who had lived in the United States for just a couple of months at the time of the interview—the feeling of being “outside” of the community of fellow Indian students at CSU seems like it would be especially hard to deal with. Luckily, I was able to spend a considerable amount of time with Anil and his roommates, who, despite some linguistic differences, seemed to be a very close-knit group with similar attitudes towards regionalism and language use.

Anil’s comments about being an “outsider” due to regional and linguistic differences relate back to the crucial communication element of subjective well-being. In Anil’s narrative, as well as the results of the survey, there is strong evidence to suggest that effective communication (or lack-thereof) is a powerful determinant of subjective well-being. Thus, for students like Anil with different regional and linguistic backgrounds than most members of the Indian student community, adjusting and achieving positive subjective well-being in a manner that is consonant with the group ideal of being able to communicate with others in a satisfying manner may be especially difficult.

For one particular informant, the issues of language and living situation merged in an interesting way. Rajinder came to the United States with very little knowledge of English. As an aspiring PhD student in biomedical sciences, Rajinder knew he would have to have a good mastery of English if he hoped to realize his academic and career goals. His time as a student in

the United States began at CSU-Pueblo, in Pueblo, Colorado. During his 2(?) years in Pueblo, Rajinder took prerequisite courses and brushed up on his English. He noted that it was relatively easy to find situations in which he was forced to practice his English, perhaps partly due to the fact that there were only a handful of fellow Indians at CSU-Pueblo. After completing some courses and retaking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Rajinder was accepted to CSU-Fort Collins' doctoral program in biomedicine. All of this came after Rajinder having already taken two years in India to work and practice his English after finishing his Master's.

Still concerned about his English, Rajinder strategically chose a living situation that would force him to speak nothing but English with his roommates. Despite being from Andhra Pradesh (a state which many of my informants told me was one of the best-represented among Indian students at CSU), and presumably having no shortage of options for roommates that spoke Telugu or Kannada, Rajinder instead moved into an apartment with three roommates from another Indian state. In addition to being less familiar with English than other Indian students at CSU, Rajinder also told me that he was less familiar with Hindi than most. Thus, living in a setting where English was the most efficient common language was a way for Rajinder to become a more efficient English communicator by necessity. This is a perfect illustration of the fact that the adjustment model for Indian international students merely entails what adjustment looks like, rather than the precise steps for getting there. In his pursuit of being better able to communicate with others (and thus simultaneously his pursuit of a cultural model of adjustment and well-being), Rajinder made the decision to enter into a living situation that differed from that of the majority of fellow Indian students. By breaking from the norm in this way, Rajinder is ultimately able to better access a "normal" state of adjustment and well-being than he would have been if he were to enter into the more common living situation of housing with other Indian

students from the same state as one's self. Thus, it appears that there is a great degree of route flexibility built into the model of adjustment among Indian students at CSU.

5.6 - Adjusting to American-style Education

5.6.1 - Plagiarism

One aspect of American culture, particularly the culture of education in the United States, that many of my informants reported having to get used to was the concept of plagiarism. Multiple informants mentioned that the American concept of plagiarism was markedly different from its Indian counterpart. American schools are much more strict about intellectual property, they reported. Some told me that they were genuinely shocked and worried to learn what was considered plagiarism by American standards.

So many Indian students at CSU experience difficulty adjusting to the American concept of plagiarism, as well as several other differences between the Indian and American approaches to education, that one of my informants, a highly involved member of the ISA, argued for the need for student-run plagiarism education sessions put on by the ISA each semester.

So those are the kinds of things the OIP (Office of International Programs) tries to introduce to us. And still we are having some problems with plagiarism and all this stuff because we didn't grow up in that way. Here it's like a really big issue. But we never really even think about taking anything from Google, we just take it. Because to study, we can't take Google in exam because that's the thing. So that kind of transition we need. And also, ISA, over the last year I think, we introduced an academic open-house. What it is regarding, we don't have this credit system there, we don't have GPA. So once the OIP does their thing, then we are gonna take all the Indian students, we will invite for a get-together, and and whoever seniors like me and some of the people, they will try to explain what is GPA, how it works. Because some people might think, 'ok it's just a report, I don't have to submit it because we have grown up that way. So that kind of thing we are trying to explain: what is plagiarism, what is copying, all this stuff we are trying to explain. And it's getting better let's say. [Rajinder – August 7, 2013]

Rajinder's comments not only nicely summarize some of the issues of adjustment to American higher education that many students from India experience, they also hint at the sense of community felt among Indian students at CSU. It was obvious in talking to Rajinder that he was truly concerned with the well-being of other Indians at CSU. This concern was not felt by Rajinder alone, as many of my informants talked about being helped by or helping other Indian students. Students who had been at CSU for at least one year were referred to as "seniors", and were considered knowledgeable resources for first-year students. Seniors seemed to view this assistance as an important responsibility, many citing the helpfulness of seniors during their first year as instrumental to their own adjustment processes.

Learning how to operate within and abide by American educational conformities is a part of the adjustment process that especially requires being capable of effective communication with others. This is not only the case in terms of understanding the way these conformities are presented by English-speaking university administrators, advisors, and faculty, but also in terms of picking up on the more informal and experience-based understandings of these conformities, like plagiarism, from other Indian international students. Thus, it seems part of the value Indian students place on effective communication as a component of adjustment and well-being stems from a practical need to be able to function within the culture of American higher education, illustrating the context-dependent structuring of the cultural models of adjustment and well-being.

5.6.2 - Experiential Learning

Access to hands-on, experiential learning was among the most-cited motivations for choosing to study at CSU and in the United States in general. Many saw a clear distinction between the teaching and learning styles of India and the United States.

Basically in India, it's like, if I join in any college in India, they teach more of theory rather than practical. So here, it's more of a practical approach. So that's the reason I chose the US. [Sagun - October 9, 2013]

...from what I had heard, and even you know that, the education system here is absolutely good and it's almost world-class. I mean, yea, and here they lay more importance on practical things than on just theory. At my university in India—in most of the universities except for a few elite colleges, the practicality of certain subjects is just left out. It's more theory and there is an exam and you write it and you pass and you are done. [Sid - June 13, 2013]

In general, informants seemed to see the Indian approach to education as emphasizing theory and mastery of concepts, whereas the American approach places more emphasis on practical knowledge. While the value of theoretical knowledge was recognized, informants generally saw the practical knowledge they would gain in the United States as something that would set them apart from other candidates for jobs back in India. The added opportunity for hands-on learning experiences was attributed to both the teaching philosophy in the United States, as well as the greater level of investment in cutting-edge technologies and facilities in the United States as compared to India. CSU was not seen as the sole provider of these opportunities, as many informants spoke of wanting to work at an American company for a few years after receiving their degree. Not only was this seen as a necessary step by many due to the practical experience gained, it was also seen as the best way to start paying back student loans as soon as possible. Many of the students I interviewed were planning on staying in the United States for 5-10 years in order to work and finish paying back student loan debt, citing the fact that it would be very difficult to pay back loans with Indian wages. Since it was seen as one of the main reasons to study in the United States, a practical and applied approach to one's discipline or profession constituted an aspect of American culture that Indian students valued and made efforts to embody.

5.7 - Expectations vs. Reality

...so I thought I'd make a lot of friends who are non-Indian. Not just Americans but also, because I envisioned like, I'm coming from India, there are other people coming from all across the world, so it would be a great opportunity. I thought it would be a great opportunity to have like, meet so many people and have a lot of friends and basically get to know a lot about different parts of the world and stuff, and just didn't end up doing it. I'm not saying it's bad, but it is different than what I thought. [Bisaj, July 17, 2013]

One issue that most of my informants dealt with was the occasional dissonance between expectation and reality. Students generally reported arriving in Fort Collins with some kind of picture in their head of what their experience over the next few years would be, both in terms of their academic and career goals, as well as what everyday life in Fort Collins might look like. The bases for these expectations stemmed from the similar experiences of friends and family members, whatever contact they had with CSU or students already at the university, as well as various media portrayals. Some, like Amit, seemed to arrive with minimal expectations. Having taken a similar approach to spending time in new places myself, I came to see the lack of expectations as a sort of defense against the potential stress and disappointment of reality failing to live up to expectations.

Even those who told me that they did have a lot of expectations prior to coming to CSU seemed to find ways to cope in the event of reality differing from expectation. Bisaj, a student who had been in Fort Collins for over two years at the time of our first interview, experienced a mismatch between expectation and reality on two fronts. For starters, his academic focus shifted substantially within the first year of his arrival in Fort Collins. He arrived ready to earn a Master's in electrical engineering with a focus on robotics, but shifted this focus in accordance with his advisor's research agenda. Not only did Bisaj shift the focus of his Master's, he also decided to switch from the Master's track to a doctorate. Despite the reality of studying at CSU

being markedly different from what he first thought it would look like, Bisaj told me that he was extremely happy with his decision to come to CSU.

The other shift Bisaj made in the face of unmet expectations was to focus energy on involvement in the Indian student community. He told me that he was not leaving enough time for socializing during his first year at CSU, and that eventually he realized he was caught in the “iron triangle”. The iron triangle was a term used during the OIP-sponsored orientation, and refers spending all of one’s time either sleeping at home, attending classes, or studying in a lab or library. This existence is not one that signals a well-balanced life, and Bisaj was feeling its detrimental effects. His expectation upon coming to CSU was that he would meet a lot of interesting people, both fellow Indian nationals and Americans alike, but his iron triangle existence was limiting opportunities for this expectation to become realized. Starting during his second year at CSU, Bisaj put time aside to become more involved in the Indian student community, particularly the Indian Students’ Association (ISA). His relationships with other Indian students deepened, and he seemed to find an added sense of purpose through this involvement. In this instance, as well as the transition to a new academic focus, Bisaj took actions that eliminated some of the dissonance he was feeling between his expectations and reality.

These actions are but two examples, yet they aptly characterize the kinds of adjustments Indian international students at CSU make when reality deviates from the expectations they may have of their time in Fort Collins. Again highlighting the importance of effective communication and a well-balanced life to the model of being well-adjusted as an Indian international student, Bisaj appears to experience a substantial improvement in subjective well-being once he started

taking the time to focus more on relating to other Indian students through non-academic socialization and recreation.

5.8 - Sense of Community

One of the major themes I came across in my research was the sense of community that Indian students reported feeling amongst Indians at CSU. Though the importance of the Indian international community has been discussed less directly throughout this chapter, it is worth exploring in a bit more depth. During semi-structured interviewing, I asked each participant to rate the feeling of community among Indian students on a sliding scale from 1 (non-existent) to 10 (. I got some slightly varying, yet very specific answers (7.1, 8.1, etc.), but what was consistent was that all interviewees reported a greater feeling of community among fellow Indians than among students at CSU in general. Most also reported feeling more connected to the Indian student community than to the student community at-large. This finding was crucial because it fed into a notion within the well-being literature that I was becoming more familiar with at the time; a notion that came to guide this thesis research. This notion is that of cultural consonance, as outlined in-depth in chapter 3. Since students were telling me that they felt a greater sense of community among fellow Indians than among CSU students in general, I tried to uncover a core set of values, beliefs, and expectations that were perhaps shared and recognized within the Indian student community. It was this unique cultural conglomerate of this community, rather than that of the overall student population at CSU, that my Indian informants seemed to talk about and reflect upon most readily. In light of the literature on the relationship between cultural consonance and well-being, as well as the recognition that the “culture” of the Indian international student community was perhaps the most relevant social force in the lives of

my informants, I set out to better understand the relationship between consonance with the culture of this community on one hand, and subjective well-being on the other.

...basically here, friends are family. For me at least. Because it's so far away, so you really have very strong relationships with friends. At least I think for internationals I think it's very true. Because, I mean, those are the people you do have here. So you rely on them, they rely on you. So it's a very tight connection. More than just what normal friends would have I would say. So that really grew in the second year. Because in the first year we were all like, "oh we're in US, yea! Let's do shit!", and eventually the ties grew stronger and so I had more experiences which I really feel helped me grow a lot more. [Bisaj, July 17, 2013]

For Bisaj (same student I just spoke about in the context of reality-expectation dissonance), the connections that he made with other Indian international students after being on campus for a year or so were a big deal in terms of his personal satisfaction with his experience at CSU. While he reports having had a lot of fun his first year at CSU, it seems that his time at CSU became more deeply fulfilling once he started to feel a stronger connection to other Indians with whom he shared his experience to some degree.

Interviewing two former presidents of the ISA gave me insight into some of the ways the sense of community among Indian international students at CSU is fostered. This process often begins, even before new students arrive on campus, via Facebook. Though the ISA does not officially reach out to students before they get to Fort Collins, the majority of incoming students do some research and end up finding the ISA's Facebook page. The page is private, and though I attempted to, I was not permitted to join. From what I was told, however, the page functions as a medium of interface for Indian students at CSU. At the end of the page description, there is a link to a Facebook group specifically for prospective CSU students from India. The "about" blurb on this page invites prospective students to post "questions", "doubts", and "queries", which will be answered by ISA committee members in as timely a manner as possible. Incoming students are

clearly encouraged to be in contact with current students before they even step on a plane to come to Fort Collins, and I got the sense that the help and peace of mind they receive from this contact was incredibly important. The piece of mind attained from questions and concerns being addressed by someone “on the ground” in Fort Collins was not limited to that of the prospective students themselves, as a few of my informants spoke of the relief their families experienced from this contact. The eased minds of family members, in turn, helped students themselves feel more comfortable and confident with their decision to come to CSU.

Once in Fort Collins, the Indian student community continues to play a major role in students’ lives. A healthy connection to this community is possible through having balance in life (i.e. making time for socializing, recreating, and connecting with other Indian students rather than spending all of one’s time studying or working) and being able to effectively communicate (i.e. cope with potential linguistic and regional differences).

5.9 – Discussion, Limitations, and Suggestions

In sum, my findings suggest a number of things. First, there appears to be strong evidence—in the form of observations, interview narratives, and survey data—to support the inclusion of life-balance and ability to communicate as major components of a cultural model of adjustment, as well as powerful determinants of subjective well-being among Indian international students at CSU. The process of finding the middle path between American acclimation and Indian preservation (i.e. adjustment) is in direct contact with these two elements of subjective well-being. Indian students who succeed in forging a balanced life and communicating effectively with those around them in Fort Collins, may be more likely to

experience positive subjective well-being, and further, may find it easier to locate a middle path that is in harmony with their principles and intentions in life.

Though the survey data did not yield a single consensus “middle path” (between acculturation and enculturation) model of adjustment, observation, interview, and survey data indeed pointed towards the importance of being able to communicate effectively with other Indians and Americans, as well as find balance in life (i.e. leave time for socializing and relaxing rather than just studying all the time). The route to realizing this model of adjustment is up to individual discretion, but is guided by a culturally recognized idea of what it looks like to be adjusted. Realizing this model of being adjusted was not only crucial for logistical reasons (i.e. success in school, everyday interactions), but it also went a long way towards the attainment of positive subjective well-being, which is shaped by, and significantly overlaps with, the model of being adjusted. The fact that there was no consensus model of this middle path speaks to its flexibility. Indeed, every one of my Indian student informants reported having to make changes in order to cope with the reality of life in Fort Collins. These changes depended on each student’s particular background, life aims, and overall personality. All variability aside, what was consistent across all participants in this study was the fact that not all possibilities for change were acted upon. I argue that these decisions were made in accordance with a value-laden mental model of what it means to be adjusted, which was shared to some degree for each student reflected a negotiation between learned and lived experience.

As a researcher, especially one who all too often feels paralyzed by epistemological concerns, I would be misrepresenting myself if I did not acknowledge the limitations of this thesis research. For starters, the size of both my interview pool and survey sample was smaller than would be ideal. Though I feel confident that this thesis has limited itself to the confines of

what can be surmised from this small sample, I cannot help but wonder what could have been said about a much larger sample. There are likely many reasons for the small sample size. It could be, at least partly, that it is simply difficult to get busy graduate students to volunteer much of their time and energy. This possibility aside, there are likely more effective means of participant recruitment than were employed in this study. Though the snowball method generally worked for interview recruitment, it was minimally effective when it came to getting survey participants. The “shoulder tap” method was eventually successful in terms of getting people to agree to be emailed the survey, but the return rate on these emails was not substantial. Future researchers in a similar setting may be wise to take more aggressive approaches to survey participant recruitment, such as frequently attending group functions with some type of sign-up sheet.

As I briefly discuss in the introduction of Chapter 4, the gender make-up of my informants would ideally have been more evenly distributed between males and females. Given the interesting gender dynamics revealed through interviews and observations with a male-dominated sample, more contact with female Indian students may have revealed further gender-effected components of the adjustment process.

The lack of success finding a consensus model of how to adjust, or the middle path, was somewhat disappointing. There are a number of potential reasons for this, including the actual non-existence of a common middle path model. While I argue, based on the ethnographic data, that this is the case, I nonetheless suspect it would be possible to find a consensus model of the set of concerns or issues that Indian international students at CSU must resolve. Though the way these concerns are addressed may indeed be highly subjective, identifying an agreed upon, emic set of concerns, could potentially provide useful knowledge for the Office of International

Programs as well as the students themselves. With very little needed in the way of funding, studies with this aim could be of much use to any university or college with an international presence on campus.

Another possible reason for the lack of a consensus model is the failure to tap into a meaningful or coherent model through the survey. Upon analysis of the UCINET results, I came to realize that I failed to include enough value-judgment items on the survey. Though there were some questions that tapped into values, there were many that, upon review, were too focused merely on the “normal” state of affairs in the lives of Indian students rather than focusing on delineating a set of common values around these norms.

Despite not yielding a consensus model of adjustment through consensus analysis, this research marks a potentially useful movement toward a better understanding of subjective well-being in the international student context. By trying to understand how adjustment and well-being are understood on their own terms, I was able to identify aspects of the way these two processes are interrelated that I would not have otherwise been able to see. Many aspects of this interrelation are undoubtedly context-specific, but the methods employed for this study serve as good starting points for future attempts at uncovering the way adjustment and well-being are intertwined in other international student contexts.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The primary conclusion I have drawn from participant observation, interviews, and survey data, is that the process of adjustment to life as an Indian international student at CSU is characterized by a culturally patterned process of acculturation. The cultural model of “being well-adjusted” prioritizes being able to achieve balance in life and communicating effectively with others. This model of adjustment structures a separate, yet closely related, cultural model of subjective well-being, and embodiment of the former is associated with heightened subjective well-being.

With one of the aims of this research being to meaningfully contribute to the acculturation of international student literature, I will now briefly discuss my take on this contribution. As I lamented at the outset of this thesis, the existing acculturation literature largely fails to account for the effect of cultural context on the acculturation process. For instance, studies like Du’s (2012) examination of cultural adjustment among Chinese international students attempt to gauge acculturation and enculturation by social connectedness to the host society on the one hand, and social connectedness to other Chinese students on the other. Underlying this analysis is the assumption that Chinese students view social connectedness as the key means through which acculturation and enculturation occur. I argue that an exploration of Chinese students’ own ideas regarding how one should go about becoming more acculturated, or enculturated, would yield a more compelling and accurate picture of their adjustment process. This more emic assessment of adjustment has been the aim of this thesis.

Berry’s (1997) four acculturation strategies have been very influential in the literature. “Assimilation”, “separation”, “integration”, and “marginalization” are, in many ways, still seen as the cardinal directions that the process of acculturation can take. My results indicate that the

acculturation strategy of Indian international students at CSU falls somewhere between integration and separation; however, locating their acculturation approach among these labels feels forced. Though Berry's four acculturation strategies are potentially helpful in terms of giving a general sense of the spectrum of approaches taken during acculturation, they fail to capture contextually-bound nuances of the process.

Achieving healthy balance in life and being able to communicate effectively and express one's self to others were substantial aspects of what it meant to "be well" among the Indian international students I observed, interviewed, and surveyed. A balanced life is one that has purpose and inspires drive, yet also affords time for socializing, leisure, and the fostering of strong familial connections. Importantly, for Indian students at CSU, who are living halfway around the world from their homes and families for the purpose of pursuing higher education, a "balanced" life might not appear balanced in a general sense. As any graduate student can attest to, life during graduate school is necessarily characterized by some imbalance towards the direction of schoolwork. While this was indeed the case for many of my informants, this imbalance was seen as a part of a larger sense of balance in life, as a temporary acceptance of a certain level of imbalance was seen as a way to ensure a balanced life down the road. Effective communication and expression, in the Indian international student context at CSU, is often challenged by regional and language differences among Indian students, as well as mastering the subtleties of English communication in new academic, professional, and everyday contexts. As students adjust to life in Fort Collins, these challenges are inevitably faced, with profound implications for subjective well-being hanging in the balance.

Indian international students' cultural model of being well-adjusted is tied to models of balance and communication that reflect Indian cultural values. With that said, these models are

not unchanged by experiences in Fort Collins. Exposure to new ways of thinking about balance and communication, as well as a new set of concerns that must be taken into account in order to achieve balance and effective communication, force the alteration of these models. This necessary alteration reflects the dynamic nature of cultural models, a phenomenon that is recognized in the cognitive anthropology literature (D'Andrade, 1995; Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Thus, though the cultural background of Indian international students does indeed help structure their adjustment process, this structuring also reflects experientially-informed changes stemming from the cultural context of Fort Collins.

Although this thesis has focused on the cultural model of being adjusted, I hope that readers have gotten the sense that this model is embedded within other cultural models. Here, Brad Shore's idea of "foundational models" is helpful (Shore, 1996). Foundational models represent deeply imbedded cultural ideas that help structure other cultural models. Indian models of gender dynamics, regional and linguistic identity, and the relationship between community and the individual, are foundational models within which the model of being well-adjusted is embedded. To truly understand the logic of the model of being well-adjusted, these foundational models must be taken into account.

The use of a mixed methods approach informed by insights from cognitive anthropology offers a fresh and vital perspective on the adjustment and well-being of international students. Though not without limitations (see section 5.8), this approach expands upon existing international student adjustment research by recognizing the vital role that the cultural background of foreign students plays in the processes of adjusting and achieving positive subjective well-being.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Age: _____

ID: _____

Gender: Male Female (circle one)

Program of study: _____

Home state (in India): _____

For the following, please circle one option.

1) Time spent in United States:

- a) Less than 1 year
- b) 1 to 2 years
- c) 2 to 3 years
- d) More than 3 years

2) Time spent in Fort Collins:

- d) Less than 1 year
- e) 1 to 2 years
- f) 2 to 3 years
- d) More than 3 years

3) How does the size of Fort Collins compare to the size of the city/town you are from?

- a) Fort Collins is much smaller.
- b) Fort Collins is a little smaller.
- c) Fort Collins is about the same size.
- d) Fort Collins is a little bigger.
- e) Fort Collins is much bigger.

4) How would you characterize your family's caste status?

- a) High
- b) Middle
- c) Low

5) Which of the following best describes your religious views?

- a) Hindu
- b) Muslim
- c) Buddhist
- d) Christian
- e) Agnostic
- f) Atheist

g) Other (please indicate): _____

For the following set of statements about Indian students at CSU (as opposed to you personally), please indicate how much you agree/disagree by circling one option.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Mostly Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Slightly Agree

5 = Mostly Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

6) It is important for Indian students to change some of their customs and habits in order to adjust to being at CSU.

1 2 3 4 5 6

7) It is important to attend cultural events (e.g. ISA events) in order to maintain a connection to Indian culture.

1 2 3 4 5 6

8) In general, most Indian students at CSU enjoy what they are studying.

1 2 3 4 5 6

9) It is important for Indian students at CSU to become more independent than they were when they were living in India.

1 2 3 4 5 6

10) The region or state that an Indian student comes from impacts their ability to get along with other Indian students at CSU.

1 2 3 4 5 6

11) The region or state that an Indian student comes from impacts their ability to adjust to life in Fort Collins.

1 2 3 4 5 6

12) An Indian student's gender impacts their ability to fit in with other Indian students at CSU.

1 2 3 4 5 6

13) An Indian student's gender impacts their ability to adjust to life in Fort Collins.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14) Language differences impact an Indian student's ability to fit in with other Indian students.

1 2 3 4 5 6

For the following set of statements about yourself, please indicate how much you agree/disagree by circling one option.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Mostly Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Slightly Agree

5 = Mostly Agree

6 = Strongly Agree

15) It has been necessary for me to change some habits and customs in order to adjust to life in Fort Collins.

1 2 3 4 5 6

16) Attending Indian cultural events at CSU is a good way for me to stay in touch with Indian culture.

1 2 3 4 5 6

17) I enjoy what I am studying at CSU.

1 2 3 4 5 6

18) I feel more independent than I did when I was living in India.

1 2 3 4 5 6

19) The region or state that I came from has impacted how well I get along with other Indian students at CSU.

1 2 3 4 5 6

20) The region or state that I came from has impacted how well I have adjusted to life in Fort Collins.

1 2 3 4 5 6

21) My gender has impacted my ability to get along with other Indian students at CSU.

1 2 3 4 5 6

22) My gender has impacted how well I've adjusted to life in Fort Collins.

1 2 3 4 5 6

23) Language differences have had an impact on my interactions with other Indian students.

1 2 3 4 5 6

24) At the moment, all of the important things in my life are well balanced.

1 2 3 4 5 6

25) I am meeting the expectations of my family and friends.

1 2 3 4 5 6

26) People understand me, and I am able to express myself.

1 2 3 4 5 6

27) I am happy with my decision to study at CSU (as opposed to another school).

1 2 3 4 5 6

For the following, please circle your response on a 1-10 scale.

32) Since starting at CSU, how would you rate your mood on an average day? (1 = Extremely unhappy, 10 = Extremely happy)

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

33) How would you rate the way you have balanced school, work, social life, extra-curricular activities, and staying in touch with your family since starting at CSU? (1 = Very little balance, 10 = Perfect balance)

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

34) How physically healthy do you feel at the moment? (1 = Extremely unhealthy, 10 = Extremely healthy)

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

35) How would you rate your overall experience so far at CSU? (1 = Awful, 10 = Incredible)

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

For the following set of questions about Indian students at CSU (as opposed to you personally), please circle one option.

36) How often should Indian students socialize with other Indians?

- a) Every day
- b) Most days
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely or never

- 37) How often should Indian students socialize with American students?
- a) Every day
 - b) Most days
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Rarely or never
- 38) Which of the following is the BEST living situation for Indian international students at CSU?
- a) Living with other Indians only
 - b) Living with Indians and Americans
 - c) Living with Americans only
 - d) Living with international students from other places
 - e) Living alone
- 39) In general, is it a good idea for Indian students to live with other Indian students from the same Indian state as them?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
- 40) What language should Indian students use to communicate with Indian roommates?
- a) A shared regional language
 - b) Hindi
 - c) English
- 41) How long do most Indian students at CSU plan on staying in the United States?
- a) Until they attain their degree from CSU
 - b) Until they finish school and pay back their student loans
 - c) Indefinitely
- 42) Which of the following do you think most Indian students would consider the most important component of “success”?
- a) Making a lot of money and having nice things
 - b) Having a happy and healthy family
 - c) Having a well-balanced life
 - d) Other (please indicate briefly): _____
- 43) Which of the following do you think most Indian students would consider the most important component of “happiness”?
- a) Getting along with others
 - b) Being content with yourself
 - c) Having success in school or work
 - d) Doing something you are passionate about
- 44) What do most Indian students do when they experience stress?
- a) Talk to friends about what is bothering them
 - b) Spend time on their own

- c) Exercise or play sports
- d) Watch movies/TV/sports
- e) Other (Please indicate briefly): _____

- 45) How often should one be in touch with their family back in India?
- a) Multiple times a day
 - b) Once every day
 - c) A few times a week
 - d) A few times a month
 - e) Rarely

For the following set of questions about yourself, please circle one option.

- 46) How often do you socialize with other Indian students?
- a) Every day
 - b) Most days
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Rarely or never
- 47) How often do you socialize with American students?
- a) Every day
 - b) Most days
 - c) Sometimes
 - d) Rarely or never
- 48) Which of the following best describes your living situation?
- a) I live with all Indians.
 - b) I live with Indians and Americans.
 - c) I live with Americans only.
 - d) I live with international students from other countries.
 - e) I live by myself.
- 49) Do you live with Indian students from the same state as you?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
- 50) What language do you mostly use to communicate with your roommates?
- a) Shared regional language
 - b) Hindi
 - c) English
- 51) How long do you plan on staying in the United States?
- a) Until I finish my degree at CSU
 - b) Until I finish school and pay back my student loans

c) Indefinitely

52) Which of the following is the most important component of “success” to you?

- a) Making a lot of money and having nice things
 - b) Having a happy and healthy family
 - c) Having a well-balanced life
 - e) Other (Please indicate briefly):
-

53) Which of the following is the most important component of “happiness” to you?

- a) Getting along with others
- b) Being content with yourself
- c) Having success in school or work
- d) Doing something you are passionate about

54) What do you do when you experience stress?

- a) Talk to friends about what is bothering me
 - b) Spend time on my own
 - c) Exercise or play sports
 - d) Watch movies/TV/sports
 - e) Other (please indicate briefly):
-

55) How often are you in touch with your family back in India?

- a) Multiple times a day
- b) Once every day
- c) A few times a week
- d) A few times a month
- e) Rarely

Appendix B: Survey Cover Letter

Survey Cover Letter

Project Title: Navigating the Middle Path: Cultural Adjustment and Subjective Well-being among Indian International Students

Name of Principal Investigator: Jeffrey Snodgrass

Name of Co-Investigator (Co-PI): Max Van Oostenburg

Contact information: Jeffrey Snodgrass and Max Van Oostenburg, Colorado State University, Department of Anthropology, Fort Collins, CO 80526, USA
Email: mpvanoo@rams.colostate.edu Phone: (616) 516-7376

Project Sponsor: Colorado State University

Dear student,

You are invited to participate in this short survey regarding life as an Indian international student at Colorado State. The survey is part of my (the Co-PI) Master's thesis research in the Department of Anthropology. Your views and perspectives are valuable and will be used to help assess the elements of the cultural adjustment process that are perhaps related to a rich and fulfilling experience at CSU.

This survey is informed by a series of interviews and observations I have carried out over the course of the last year, and is primarily focused on your feelings on matters of cultural adjustment to life at CSU-Fort Collins, as well as your take on the way the CSU Indian student community as a whole thinks about these matters. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to skip any parts of the survey that may make you uncomfortable to answer. Your confidentiality is a top priority, and you will be assigned an alias and identification number during data analysis.

Along with confidentiality, a faithful representation of the perspectives and voices of Indian international student participants is a major goal of this research. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns, and/or comments regarding this survey or my research in general.

If you have any questions before you begin this survey, please ask them now. You may also contact me later at (616) 516-7376, or at mpvanoo@rams.colostate.edu if questions should arise.

Regards,
Max Van Oostenburg

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

- 1) How often do you socialize with other Indian students?
- 2) Do you feel like you generally get along with other Indian students?
- 3) Describe the “average” Indian student here at CSU.
- 4) In what ways are you similar to other Indian students here?
- 5) In what ways do you see yourself as different from other Indian students?
- 6) How diverse is the Indian student population here?
- 7) How many of the Indian students at CSU would you say you know? Is there a sense of community?
- 8) On a sliding scale between completely cohesive and completely scattered, how would you characterize the “community” of Indian students at CSU?
- 9) Was the number of other Indian students at CSU a factor in your decision to come here?
- 10) If you were to describe what the ISA is to someone who knows nothing about it, what would you say?
- 11) How often do you attend ISA-related events?
- 12) Do you enjoy these events?
- 13) What is the best part about being involved in the ISA?
- 14) If you could change something about the ISA, what would it be?
- 15) Do you feel like you generally get along with others in the ISA?
- 16) How often do you socialize with other Indian students?
- 17) Would you say that the region in India a student comes from will affect his or her experience with other Indians in Fort Collins? In what ways?

What about being a female Indian international student is there that male Indian international students could never understand?
- 18) Do you think the experience of male Indian students here is much different from the experience of female Indian students?

- 19) How often do you socialize with non-Indian students?
 - 20) Have you been surprised by anything about the United States, Americans, Fort Collins, Colorado State, etc.?
 - 21) Have you had to make any changes to your attitude, personality, or approach towards work and/or social situations since coming to Fort Collins?
 - 22) Have you had to make any major or minor adjustments to your life and daily routine since coming to Fort Collins?
 - 23) Have any of these adjustments been especially stressful, difficult, or otherwise slow to occur?
 - 24) Have any of these adjustments been easy? What made them so?
 - 25) Is religion, faith, and/or spirituality an important part of your life?
 - 26) Can you think of a time when you were completely happy or content?
 - 27) What area of your life would you say has the greatest day-to-day impact on your well-being?
 - 28) Is there anything you do regularly (activities, hobbies, habits, superstitions, etc) that you feel help you relieve stress, stay grounded, or get the most out of life?
 - 29) How do you think it would feel if you stopped doing this/these thing(s)?
 - 30) What is your top priority in life?
 - 31) How do you define success?
 - 32) How do you define happiness?
- Do you experience stress?
- 33) How often do you experience stress?
 - 34) What is the biggest source of stress in your life?
 - 35) When you feel stressed, what helps?
 - 36) Have you heard the terms “introvert” and “extrovert”? If these terms were on either end of a sliding scale, where would you put yourself on it?

37) Do you feel like your friends and peers understand who you are as a person?

38) Have you ever seriously considered staying in the United States after graduation? For how long?

39) Has anyone else in your immediate or extended family studied outside of India? In the United States?

Appendix D: UCINET Output

CONSENSUS ANALYSIS

Type of data: Profiles: A row of data for each respondent
Analytic model: Multiple choice
Input dataset: consensus (E:\consensus)
Competence scores: competence (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\competence)
Answer key: answerkey (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\answerkey)
2nd factor loadings: loadings_on_2nd_factor (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\loadings_on_2nd_factor)
Agreement matrix: agreement (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\agreement)

IMPORTANT: Agreement among some respondents was not calculable, either because there was no variance in their responses, or had too many missing values.

The correlations have been set to zero, but the correct thing to do is to drop these respondents and rerun the data.

Agreement among respondents

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	1.00	0.05	0.00	0.18	0.05	0.18	0.24	0.18	0.12	0.18	0.05	0.37
2	0.05	1.00	0.07	0.24	0.12	0.31	0.24	0.18	0.18	0.31	0.12	0.12
3	0.00	0.07	1.00	0.27	0.20	0.07	0.20	0.20	0.27	0.00	0.33	0.13
4	0.18	0.24	0.27	1.00	0.05	0.31	0.24	0.37	0.37	0.31	0.43	0.18
5	0.05	0.12	0.20	0.05	1.00	-0.14	0.12	0.18	0.24	0.31	0.18	0.24
6	0.18	0.31	0.07	0.31	-0.14	1.00	0.43	0.31	0.18	0.24	0.12	-0.07
7	0.24	0.24	0.20	0.24	0.12	0.43	1.00	0.24	0.31	0.24	0.18	0.24
8	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.37	0.18	0.31	0.24	1.00	0.24	0.43	0.31	0.12
9	0.12	0.18	0.27	0.37	0.24	0.18	0.31	0.24	1.00	0.31	0.24	0.24
10	0.18	0.31	0.00	0.31	0.31	0.24	0.24	0.43	0.31	1.00	0.18	0.18
11	0.05	0.12	0.33	0.43	0.18	0.12	0.18	0.31	0.24	0.18	1.00	0.18
12	0.37	0.12	0.13	0.18	0.24	-0.07	0.24	0.12	0.24	0.18	0.18	1.00

No. of negative competencies: 0
Largest eigenvalue: 2.575

2nd largest eigenvalue: 0.951
 Ratio of largest to next: 2.706

The weak eigenratio indicates lack of fit to the consensus model
 -- most likely, your respondents are drawn from a mix of two cultures.

Competence Scores:

1

 1 0.311
 2 0.390
 3 0.346
 4 0.622
 5 0.297
 6 0.421
 7 0.529
 8 0.573
 9 0.545
 10 0.548
 11 0.472
 12 0.354

ITEM 1: M-Change

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	1	0.69
2	2	2.00
3	0	0.00
4	1	0.93
5	4	4.32
6	4	4.06

ITEM 2: M-Cult Events

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	3	3.17
2	1	0.77
3	1	0.86
4	1	1.22
5	3	3.09
6	3	2.89

ITEM 3: M-Enjoy Study

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	0	0.00
2	2	1.80
3	0	0.00
4	2	2.07
5	5	4.43
6	3	3.70

ITEM 4: M-Independent

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	0	0.00
2	0	0.00
3	0	0.00
4	0	0.00
5	3	2.13
6	9	9.87

ITEM 5: M-Region-fit

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	1	1.38
2	1	1.21
3	1	0.69
4	3	2.66
5	4	4.02
6	2	2.04

ITEM 6: M-Region-adj

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	2	1.47
2	2	1.87
3	1	1.05
4	2	2.15
5	3	3.32
6	2	2.14

ITEM 7: M-gender-fit

Response Frequency Wtd. Freq.

1 2 2.26
2 3 3.26
3 2 1.47
4 4 4.24
5 0 0.00
6 1 0.77

ITEM 8: M-Gender-adj

Response Frequency Wtd. Freq.

1 5 5.53
2 4 4.22
3 0 0.00
4 2 2.25
5 0 0.00
6 0 0.00

ITEM 9: M-Lang

Response Frequency Wtd. Freq.

1 1 0.86
2 0 0.00
3 1 1.05
4 5 4.62
5 4 4.70
6 1 0.77

ITEM 10: M-socialize-I

Response Frequency Wtd. Freq.

1 1 0.79
2 7 7.54
3 4 3.68
4 0 0.00
5 0 0.00
6 0 0.00

ITEM 11: M-Socialize-A

Response Frequency Wtd. Freq.

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	1	1.22
2	7	7.43
3	4	3.36
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 12: M-Living Sitch

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	4	3.69
2	8	8.31
3	0	0.00
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 13: M-Live Same State

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	8	7.37
2	3	3.36
3	1	1.27
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 14: M-Room Comm

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	5	5.01
2	3	2.80
3	4	4.20
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 15: M-Stay US

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	0	0.00

2	9	9.30
3	3	2.70
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 16: M-Success

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	2	1.55
2	3	2.56
3	5	5.78
4	2	2.11
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 17: M-Happy

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	1	0.79
2	1	0.69
3	3	2.70
4	7	7.83
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

ITEM 18: M- Stress

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	8	8.77
2	0	0.00
3	0	0.00
4	2	1.43
5	2	1.80
6	0	0.00

ITEM 19: M-Fam contact

Response	Frequency	Wtd. Freq.
1	0	0.00
2	8	8.30
3	0	0.00

4	4	3.70
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00

Answer Key

Shee

1 M-Change 5.00
 2 M-Cult Events 1.00
 3 M-Enjoy Study 5.00
 4 M-Independent 6.00
 5 M-Region-fit 5.00
 6 M-Region-adj 5.00
 7 M-gender-fit 4.00
 8 M-Gender-adj 1.00
 9 M-Lang 4.00
 10 M-socialize-I 2.00
 11 M-Socialize-A 2.00
 12 M-Living Sitch 2.00
 13 M-Live Same State 1.00
 14 M-Room Comm 1.00
 15 M-Stay US 2.00
 16 M-Success 3.00
 17 M-Happy 4.00
 18 M- Stress 1.00
 19 M-Fam contact 2.00

Competence scores saved as: competence (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\competence)

Answer key saved as: answerkey (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\answerkey)

2nd factor loadings saved as: loadings_on_2nd_factor (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\loadings_on_2nd_factor)

Resp-by-resp agreement matrix saved as: agreement (C:\Users\ethnolab\Documents\UCINET data\agreement)

 Running time: 00:00:01

Output generated: 09 Oct 14 13:51:29

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