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Twice Migration and Indo-Caribbean American Identity Politics

Jessica Ramsawak
University at Albany, State University of New York, jramsawak@albany.edu

Twice Migration and Indo-Caribbean American Identity Politics

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Jessica Ramsawak

Research Advisor: Niloufer Siddiqui, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Being an Indo-Caribbean American can be a confusing and inspiring experience. It is marked with a desperation for understanding oneself and one's mother, while simultaneously traumatized and burdened with a history of displacement. Migration history can inform the ways in which members of ethnic communities view themselves, their heritage, and their ethnic identity. This is particularly true of the first-generation Indo-Caribbean community in America. The term Indo-Caribbean describes the waves of Indian indentured laborers that were sent to the Caribbean in the early 1800s, developed an Indo-Caribbean culture, and then emigrated in the 1980s to join the Indian diaspora in the US, UK, Canada, and other countries all over the world. This shift in homelands, or "twice migration", renders the first-generation American children of these migrants as Indo-Caribbean American, a demographic whose culture is a fusion of Indian roots, Caribbean influence, and an American lifestyle. This fused culture has grown into a community that is distinct from both the Indian American and Caribbean-American experience. A majority of the first-generation children of the migrants in the second wave now becoming college-aged and are quickly developing a relationship with their culture outside the influence of their parents. My research seeks to examine how this immigration history affects the ways in which first-generation American members of the community view their own identity, in an attempt to identify the primary influences for these attitudes. Scholars have proposed different theories about what aspects of the twice migration history can impact the development of identity. The most prominent theories are having confusion over one's identity and seeking to educate oneself in order to understand oneself more, facing discrimination within the South Asian community and educating oneself about their culture in order to combat this, and having either a positive or negative relationship with their homelands and seeking education about it either due to love and familiarity or to longing and incompleteness. After establishing these theories, I recruited a sample of voluntary college-aged first-generation Indo-Caribbean American participants who filled out a questionnaire asking about their experiences and their feelings towards their heritage and identity. This data allowed me to understand which out of the three possible theories had the most relevance in the population's view of their ethnic identity, and allowed me to conclude that while every individual is different, the experiences of this generation overlap and highly contribute to the makeup of our ethnic identities.

Keywords: Indo-Caribbean American, twice migration, ethnic identity, immigration

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This year, I also worked as a researcher in the Albany Birth Justice Storytelling Project, led by Dr. Rajani Bhatia. The project is participatory action research that combines a photovoice and transformative storytelling approach to collect qualitative data on the experience of Black birthing people from Albany who are impacted by racial inequities in birth outcomes. Dr. Rajani Bhatia taught me about the value of conducting qualitative research and the importance of empathy, trauma-informed listening, and fundamental respect in collecting data through storytelling. Through her project, I also became IRB certified to conduct research with human subjects, which aided this project's completion.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Siddiqui, who helped me form my initial research plan and provided help and guidance throughout.

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Twice Migration and Indo-Caribbean American Identity Politics

Ethnic identity is the perception of one's self in the context of one's heritage and culture. Many factors contribute to the development of one's ethnic identity, including childhood experiences, relations within and outside of one's community, and one's proximity to authenticity within their culture. Ashley Doane (1997) argues that the dominance or "underdevelopment" of a group's ethnic identity is influenced by four key factors: size, power, appearance, and discrimination. Doane concludes that for dominant ethnic groups, "ethnicity is optional...a matter of choice rather than a core identity...dominant group ethnicity is present...but *hidden*, serving as the unacknowledged mainstream of American society". (Doane, 1997), meaning for dominant ethnic groups in America, core identity is not highly determined by ethnicity. However, for ethnic groups like the Indo-Caribbean community in America, which is particularly small, overlooked, and distinct from even the general South Asian community, it follows that there is a heightened sense of identity and "increasing search for a feeling of we-ness" (Roopnarine, 2006).

The term Indo-Caribbean describes the waves of Indian indentured laborers that were sent to the Caribbean in the early 1800s, developed an Indo-Caribbean culture, and then emigrated in the 1980s to join the Indian diaspora in the US, UK, Canada, and other countries all over the world. For Indo-Caribbean Americans, forming an ethnic identity that has high relevance to modern Indian culture is difficult because of the distance that this generation has to authentic traditions, languages, and customs. Roopnarine (2006) argues that the community's migration history has damaged the ability to maintain original customs, "...due to the dislocation and displacement of East Indians during the indenture (primary migration) and the contemporary period (secondary migration)...colonialism and imperialism in the former case and

marginalization and globalization in the latter case" (Roopnarine, 2006). This movement from India to the Caribbean, and then from the Caribbean to developed countries like the US and Canada has been termed *twice migration* and contributes heavily to the development of the Indo-Caribbean American identity. This migration history has distanced generations of Indians in indenture from their traditional roots, and later first-generation Americans from their parents' island roots, to create a lingering, longing culture that is all their own. I seek to examine the interests and attitudes of this demographic in order to understand how twice migration history affects them and how being an Indo-Caribbean American has impacted their experiences and identity.

Background

History of Indian Indentured Laborers

The Indo-Caribbean community describes the population of Caribbeans most commonly living in Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and Guyana, with descent from the Indian subcontinent. They are descendants of the original indentured workers brought by the British, the Dutch, and the French during colonial times, defined by author Elizabeth Jaikaran as "Caribbean nationals with East Indian ancestry" (Jaikaran, 2017). The community is marked by periods of migration that contributed to the fusion and creation of the Indo-Caribbean culture. Lomarsh Roopnarine in "Indo-Caribbean Migration: From Periphery to Core" (2003) discusses two main periods of Indo-Caribbean migration: migration under indenture (1838-1917) and migration to Europe and North America (1962-present). The first period describes the arrival of Indians to the Caribbean between 1838 and 1917. According to Roopnarine, "after failed immigration schemes from Africa, Europe, Asia, and from within the Caribbean…indentured servants proved to be a

cheap solution to the Caribbean labor problem" (Roopnarine, 2003). Indians were brought to the Caribbean under the indenture system, in which they were required to provide contract labor for the planter class. Indians replaced Africans who, until their emancipation in 1834, had provided labor as slaves on the British-owned sugar plantations (Birbalsingh, 2004). The indenture service required each Indian laborer to work with one employer for five years. In return, the employer was obligated to provide indentured East Indians with fixed wages, free housing, medical services, and other amenities (Roopnarine, 2003). Despite the contractual agreement, the system was abused and manipulated in favor of colonial governments and the planter class, who were concerned about production and profit rather than the general welfare of the emigrants. For example, planters provided fixed wages so that workers could not take advantage of the increases in the market value of labor, and avoided compensating workers in other respects as well, "...the planters failure to provide adequate medical care and housing...caused defection" (Roopnarine, 2006). Indentured laborers were reduced to and racialized as "coolie", a racial slur meaning "an inferior person who simply labors for hire" (Pillai, 2019), that is still used in the Caribbean and other diasporas to demean Indo-Caribbeans and set them apart them from Indians and Caribbeans. When the indenture system finally collapsed in 1917, about 500,000 East Indians had been brought to the Caribbean: 238,000 to Guyana, 143,939 to Trinidad, 43,404 to Suriname, and smaller numbers to Jamaica, Martinique, French Guiana, and Grenada (Tinker, 1974). The colonial governments pushed for indentured servants to stay in the Caribbean by granting indentured servants pieces of land in lieu of return passage to India, in order to retain seasoned laborers and to dispense with the financial responsibility of repatriation costs, which at the time amounted to $250,000 US dollars (Roopnarine, 2006). This policy began in 1851 in Trinidad, and 1,010 indentured workers settled, despite the fact that the land given to the workers

"was of poor quality and posed serious challenges to successful community development and independent survival." (Roopnarine, 2006). Their descendants today form about 20% of the population in the English-speaking Caribbean, but they are concentrated in Guyana and Trinidad, where they form respectively 51% and 40% of the population. (Birbalsingh, 2004).

Second Wave of Migration

The second and most recent period of Indo-Caribbean migration describes migration to Europe and North America from 1962 to the present. This period was initiated when most Caribbean colonies were granted independence from their colonizers in the 1960s and 1970s. As the colonies created political parties and formed their own governments, the different populations clashed racially and ideologically, causing many Indians to emigrate to developed nations to avoid political turmoil, economic troubles, and civil war (Roopnarine, 2003). This period also coincided with reformed immigration policy in the US, Canada, and the UK, which enabled migrants to move with greater ease and in higher numbers. Roopnarine (2003) estimates that about 85,000 Indians left Guyana between 1981 and 1988. She concludes that this period of migration was principally to "white host societies...the volume of migration has been larger, represents the first time most East Indians made contact with white societies, and it has been from periphery to the core." (Roopnarine, 2003)

This period brings us to the present day. For the purposes of my sample, I will be focusing on the first-generation Indo-Caribbean American community living in New York City. More than half of all Guyanese immigrants and 40% of all Trinidadian immigrants in the United States live in New York City. According to The Newest New Yorker Report from the NYC Department of City Planning, in New York City, the combined foreign-born population of

Guyana and Trinidad is 227,582. This number represents the population of relatively recent migrants from Guyana and Trinidad, whose children are first-generation Americans. This community is the 3rd highest foreign-born population in New York City, trailing only the Dominican Republic (380,160) and China (350,231). Queens has the largest concentration of Indo-Caribbeans among the five boroughs. Guyanese Americans represent the second largest foreign-born population in Queens, with over 82,000 individuals trailing only Chinese immigrants who account for over 142,000. The reports also found that Queens also has the largest concentration of Indo-Caribbeans among the five boroughs. The Indo-Caribbean American community in Queens has been representative of the first-generation American ethnic identity, with many Indo-Caribbean owned businesses and products available in the area.

My sample focuses on the first-generation Indo-Caribbean American demographic because it represents the children of the children of the generation that left the Caribbean between the 1960s and the 1990s, the period that represents the first wave of Indo-Caribbean migrants to the United States. While these migrants grew up in the Caribbean, their children grew up with immigrant parents in a new American environment. This particular ethnic identity is brand new and rapidly evolving as children grow up and seek out their culture on their own terms, without the influence of their families. Rupa Pillai exemplifies this generation in her article "A Question of Voice: Indo-Caribbean American Feminism through Music in New York City", in which she writes about an Indo-Caribbean American woman struggling with authenticity within her identity, who performs classical Indian dance and song in order to connect to her roots and understand herself. Pillai concludes, "...because this history of twice migration renders their Indianness as less than, this double-diasporic community relies upon the authentic performances of classical Indian traditions to claim belonging to the Indian American

diaspora and, by extension, access to the privileges associated with being acknowledged as a model minority in the United States." (Pillai, 2019). The migration history in this community greatly impacts the development of the Indo-Caribbean American ethnic identity.

Through this research, I conclude that there are three main influences on Indo-Caribbean American culture that contribute to the development of ethnic identity: feeling confused between Indian, Caribbean, and American influences, facing discrimination within the South Asian community, and having either a positive or negative relationship with their homelands.

Confusion between Three Worlds

One possible contributor to the development of the Indo-Caribbean American identity is the confusion that comes with their fused heritage, and the work that is necessary in order to understand oneself in this community. Noted Indo-Caribbean scholar Lomarsh Roopnarine in "Indo-Caribbean Social Identity"(2006) breaks down the development of the Indo-Caribbean identity in terms of its relationship with East Indian culture and Caribbean creole culture, "In...white host societies where their identity is continuously jettisoned and reshaped accordingly...East Indians in Diasporic communities...maintain a separate identity from Whites, Blacks, West Indians, and South Asians" (Roopnarine, 2006). Because their identities are based in three different cultures, with an Indian foundation, Caribbean influence, and American lifestyle, Indo-Caribbean American children can be unsure of how to present themselves to their Indian or Caribbean classmates and friends. A direct example of confusion stemming from twice migration history is the unique accent that distinguishes Indo-Caribbeans from other Caribbean and South Asian immigrants, "the Indo-Caribbean speak the same English creole as their national counterparts of different ethnicities — an anamorphic brand of English that can only be

formed by a people ripped from their lands and forced to place a strange language on their

reluctant tongues. A patois infused with words gleaned from both African and Indian dialects.

This linguistic separation is the key factor contributing to our isolation as a separate cultural

tradition" (Jaikaran, 2017). The language being spoken is English, but the accent can make it

sound foreign and unrecognizable to those unfamiliar with Caribbean speech, especially paired

with the disconnect created by the sound coming out of an Indian-appearing body. This is an

example of a distinctly Indo-Caribbean identifier that can cause members of the community to be

confused about where they come from. The accent is also a key example of the migration history

of the community, which demonstrates a historical effort to hold on to Indian customs in a

Caribbean environment, and even in contemporary times to hold on to the generationally created

Indo-Caribbean roots in America. This confusion can highly contribute to the development of the

Indo-Caribbean American ethnic identity.

Discrimination within the South Asian Community

Another influence on the ethnic identity of first-generation Indo-Caribbean Americans is

lacking a sense of belonging through experiencing discrimination within the South Asian

American community. It has been shown that first generation Indo-Caribbean Americans are

more interested in identifying with their dual identity rather than assimilating into South Asian

American communities. Pillai (2019) describes the Indo-Caribbean community as a "minority

within a minority", or largely invisible in the United States. This is particularly true within the

South Asian American community due to a lack of awareness about Indo-Caribbean history and

culture, which contributes to the rampant misconceptions and assumptions made about the

community, people and "their Indianness" (Pillai, 2019). This uncertainty about the amount of

"Indianness" that Indo-Caribbeans can claim makes it hard for them to have the permission, space and ability to express their Indian roots. This can be traumatic because Indo-Caribbeans face backlash and prejudice in America for not participating in things like their native Indian languages, as Jaikaran (2017) reflects, "Trauma begins when the first Indian laborers were forced to forget their native tongues, and re-emerges when the Indo-Caribbeans were ostracized for not retaining those very dialects."

On top of the dealing with ignorance about their culture, Indo-Caribbeans have historically faced discrimination and prejudice within the South Asian community. The reality of this discrimination is clearly explained in "The Politics of Brown Mutuality: Reflections on Lilly Singh, Cultural Appropriation and Queer Amnesia" in which the authors state, "Indo-Caribbeans are often seen by South Asians as betrayals to the purity of the subcontinental and Desi Indianness - as 'disgusting,' 'immoral,' 'primitive,' 'corrupt,' 'backward,' 'uncivilized,' immodest,' and 'vulgar.' Indian-looking yet never Indian enough" (Persadie et al., 2019). This picture of indenture as degrading and impure resurrects the image of the "coolie." As mentioned previously, Indian indentured laborers in the Caribbean were branded with the racial slur "coolie", meaning "an inferior person who simply labors for hire". This construct rendered Indians in indenture and the generations created after their arrival as uncultured and devoid of respect (Pillai, 2019). This rhetoric sounds familiar, as threats of impurity have historically been used to dehumanize other racial groups, such as African slaves, and also have been used to set minority groups apart from one another. In "Race, Rape and Representation: Indo-Caribbean Women and Cultural Nationalism," Puri (1997) discusses this latter idea that stems from colonial conflicts between Afro-Caribbeans and Indo-Caribbeans, "...we continue to hear the familiar series of oppositions that the British colonialist James Anthony Froude originally mobilized in

1880: the thriftless African vs. the thrifty Indian; the lazy African vs. the hard-working Indian; the childlike African unable to control his sexual appetites vs. the calculating and ascetic Indian...Indian wealth here is framed as a fear of Indian economic dislocation of Afro-Trinidadians and as a charge of Indian dishonesty; Indians are, thus, depicted as robbing the nation." (Puri, 1997) Pairing the emphasis of impurity and vulgarity with the history of Indians in the Caribbean, which is the main distinction between the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities, reveals the inherent anti-blackness that fuels discrimination between the groups. According to Pillai, achieving recognition in the South Asian community would mean distancing oneself from one's Caribbean roots to pursue a pure, idealized Indian standard that our community can no longer claim, "...for her audience, Indo-Caribbean American identity is limited to an ideal of Indianness to gain proximity to the model minority status of Indian American and to distance themselves from the negative markers given to Caribbean communities in the United States" (Pillai, 2019). Attempting to achieve an Indian ideal is damaging because the community is too distant from its Indian roots to be able to assimilate back into the original culture. The historical and contemporary treatment of Indo-Caribbeans within the South Asian community contributes to why Indo-Caribbeans find strength and unity in their culture rather than seeking assimilation, as Jaikaran (2017) reflects "after being rejected from the village, we built our own."

Relationship to one's homeland

One final theory is that the Indo-Caribbean American ethnic identity can be developed by one's relationship with their homelands in the Indian diaspora, most commonly Trinidad and Tobago or Guyana. The Indian diaspora describes the movement and migration of the Indian

people away from their ancestral homeland and includes the populations of Indians that migrated to the Caribbean, the US, Canada, and other countries all around the world. The impact of the migration history of Indo-Caribbeans manifests in the Indo-Caribbean American's inability to recognize India as a homeland, through loss of generational history, knowledge of original language or customs, and disconnect in understanding and cultural relevance. Because of this, the Caribbean and countries in the Indian diaspora have served as more tangible, comfortable homelands to seek return, "conceived from a space of distance and characterized by an attempt to recuperate the loss of a homeland caused by multiple displacements, diasporic communities tend to construct seamless and homogenous narratives that fashion the differentiated space of home into a cohesive whole" (Bhatia, 1998). Having either a positive or negative relationship with one's homeland can influence one to seek information about it either due to love and familiarity or to longing and incompleteness. It is shown that Indo-Caribbeans do recognize their homelands in ways that impact their ethnic identity, "...overseas East Indians may go at length "to educate" whites as to who they are and where they come from even though they might have little meaningful contact with their land of birth" (Roopnarine, 2006), so although they may not have visited or lived in their Caribbean homelands, there exists respect, loyalty, and connection to the islands. This connection can contribute to the development of the Indo-Caribbean American identity.

Methods

Participants

Guided by these possible theories, I conducted qualitative research through questionnaires, or surveys, to examine the attitudes and perspectives of a sample of the Indo-

Caribbean American community. Participants in this study included twelve first generation Indo-Caribbean Americans, six males and six females between the ages of 19 and 24. All participants are Americans living in different parts of New York and are similar in their age group, ethnicity, and location, but are mixed in gender and diverse in interests and occupations. All participants in this study were volunteers recruited by email and convenience sampling through mutual contacts.

Materials

Participants were asked to fill out a survey with six questions pertaining to the topic of the study. All participants consented to including their responses in the study, and were informed about procedures, benefits and risks of participating. To confirm participation after recruitment, participants were asked to submit their email addresses to the researcher to be sent the questionnaire. Submitting the email address ensured understanding of the project and the responsibilities of participation, as well as provided consent for including each participant's answers in the project. The purpose of the study was included in initial recruitment messages and also on the survey. The full questionnaire and its findings are located in the Appendix.

The questions asked in the survey were designed in order to understand the degree to which certain experiences influence the Indo-Caribbean American identity and to shed light on the possible answers to the research question. The questions were: "What is your ethnicity? Where are your parents from?", "How would you define your identity? Do you feel, or have you ever felt, confused about it?", "How have you engaged with your heritage from childhood? As an adult?", "What is your relationship with your motherland? Has this relationship influenced the way that you view your identity?", "Have you experienced discrimination within the South Asian

community? If so, in what ways? How did these experiences influence your view of your identity?", and "Do you feel that you are driven by your identity? In what ways does your identity motivate you?" Since the interviewees are all Indo-Caribbean Americans in their twenties, the most similar systems design will enable me to identify the most salient cause for their attitudes towards their identity. I will be examining the responses between the twelve similar participants and look for key differences that will allow me to eliminate possible theories about the research topic.

Design and Procedure

The methodology of this project and the recruitment of the research sample were designed to enable the employment of the most similar systems design, in which I could find key differences between the very similar participants surveyed in order to eliminate my possible answers to come to a conclusion about the research question. After obtaining informed consent, I sent each participant the questionnaire via email. Participants were reminded of the goals of the project, that their responses would remain anonymous and that they may omit any question or cease participation at any time. After the surveys were completed and sent back to me, I debriefed each participant, asked if they had any questions, and thanked them for their cooperation.

Results and Analysis

The questionnaires were able to provide interesting, insightful data to inform the research. Overall, participants answered questions thoroughly with the exception of two males, who answered in a yes or no format. The participants were more vocal in the questions that asked

them for specific examples, such as discussing experiences of discrimination within the South Asian community, and less vocal when the questions were more open-ended, such as asking if they ever felt confused about their identity. This resulted in many overlaps and similar feelings amongst the group, different but shared experiences, and also allowed for the elimination of some theories.

When asked "How would you define your identity? Do you feel, or have you ever felt, confused about it?" participants all responded that they identify as West Indian, Guyanese-American, or Trinidadian-American. Three participants responded that yes, they have felt deep confusion or internal crisis due to their American and Indo-Caribbean heritages colliding, with one stating "*My identity I believe is very confusing, I am Indian, Caribbean, and American. All of my identities have at one point or another have made me fight to be able to claim as my own although it is who I am. Geographically, culturally, and traditionally*", and the other participant reflecting, *"Defining my identity is something I struggle with. I grew up in Long Island and went to a predominantly white high school that shaped a lot of my identity...My Guyanese culture came from home and my family's "Guyanese culture" is the only thing I knew. Being that the two worlds I belonged to were vastly different, I have always felt confused about my identity and where I belonged. In high school I was known for being somewhat ambiguous causing my peers to not know how to identify me most of the time. It seemed that everyone else had a category, but I never did.*" These experiences mirror the discussion in the literature about feeling confused between three worlds, and greatly contribute to the makeup of the Indo-Caribbean American identity. However, six out of the twelve participants responded that they did not feel confused about defining themselves as Indo-Caribbean American, or in the case of one simply American. The other three expressed that confusion only affected them in minor ways; for example,

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participants cited confusion when identifying their race on documents, unsure of whether to categorize themselves as Asian, Black, or Other. This data shows that feeling confusion over one's identity is not a major contributor to the development of the Indo-Caribbean American ethnic identity. Although the Indo-Caribbean culture may appear confusing to outsiders who do not understand the accent or customs, within the culture members feel comfortable and accepting of their heritage. Although it may be true that more first-generation Americans experience confusion because the culture is a fusion between three lands with so many moving parts, I think these feelings manifest themselves not in misunderstanding, but in a desire to learn.

When asked, "What is your relationship with your motherland? Has this relationship influenced the way that you view your identity?" participants had very mixed experiences but ultimately all felt similarly about their relationship with their homelands. A majority of the sample had very little experience visiting their homeland, with four never having visited at all and four visiting between one and three times in their lifetimes. These participants all stated that their relationship with their homeland had little impact on their ethnic identity, but they still cited deep appreciation, respect, and connection to the islands. One participant was actually born in Guyana and moved to the United States as a baby, so she cites a very special relationship with her homeland. Although she does not visit often, she feels connected to Guyana and has a positive view of it as an influence on her ethnic identity. The other three participants stated that they visited often throughout their lifetimes, over summers to visit family and in their adult lives. Of those that visit often, participants all cite deep respect and impact that the relationship has on their ethnic identity. One participant reflects, "*In retrospect, this relationship has shaped the way I view my identity because it has made me extremely protective of it. I feel indebted almost, like it*

is not fully mine, so I have to do it justice when I leave." Based on this data, I definitely think that one's relationship to their homeland has an impact on their outlook on life and drive to succeed, as even the respondents with less experience with their homelands shared respect and connection to the islands, but not necessarily as the greatest influence on the development of their ethnic identity.

When asked, "Have you experienced discrimination within the South Asian community? If so, in what ways? How did these experiences influence your view of your identity?" only three out of the eleven participants said that they had never explicitly experienced discrimination within the South Asian community. One participant admitted that he did not have much experience with members of the South Asian community, and therefore did not experience much discrimination. The rest of the sample all shared examples of discrimination that they have experienced throughout their lifetimes. I found it interesting that the discrimination seemed to be similar between genders, although all of the negative responses were from males.

Of those that have experienced discrimination, many participants cited microaggressions that over time contributed to the creation of distance between the two communities. Participants shared stories of the ways in which their relationship to the South Asian community changed their perception of themselves in childhood, *"I never felt Indian enough, I was not a part of the cliques with the Indian girls because I wasn't one of them. I was not able to speak their language when they would sneakily talk about someone. I was not able to be so in tune with my culture the way they are, but looking back at it, we are not the same so trying to fit in would never work...I was categorized as one of "the Indians". Yes, I am Indian, but I'm not one of 'the Indians'."* and two other participants discussed how this treatment has affected their in their young adult lives, with one discussing how she was met with confusion by South Asian men, *"Even as I got older,*

dating boys who were Indian or Pakistani, they did not understand how I could claim to be 'brown' when my family didn't come from those places.'' , and another discussing being treated with disrespect as an Indo-Caribbean woman, "*I noticed the Indian guys I'd talked to treated me differently and expected more of me than they did any of my other friends and I think that was in part due to what they may hear in songs or see on social media. Caribbean women are constantly fetishized by people inside and outside of our community. Especially because our ancestors came from different cultures before ending up in the Caribbean, it can be confusing for people to respect the difference. We look like them, but we are not them, not anymore.*" The idea of fetishization was a crucial finding, as it re-introduced the historical experiences of disrespect and impurity discussed in the literature and framed it in the real experiences of Indo-Caribbean Americans today. This is a direct example of how this history affects us today.

One of the main forms of tension were that many participants felt that they always needed to explain their ethnicity to people upon meeting them for the first time, as one of the male participants reflects, "*Within being Caribbean...you have to explain that your parents or Grandparents were not born in India, that yes we eat similar foods, no we do not wear the cultural clothes regularly, yes I listen to everything from Bhajans, Chutney, Soca, Reggae, Calypso, and Dancehall...But at the same time, I've been told, "You're like the fake Indian." And regardless which statement, both hurt.*" This goes hand in hand with the feeling of needing to prove oneself and one's claim to Indian culture through dance, food, and music. One participant gave an example, "*I remember the first time I felt it totally in my face was in college when I joined a "Bollywood" dance team...and I was the only West Indian on the team. When I was cut from a dance that was a dancehall song, and wasn't even asked to contribute to choreography, I felt erased. A few years later I was told I wasn't "even really Indian" when running for*

President of the (then) South Asian group on campus. When you're rejected from a community in which your own community shares so much with - it's easy to internalize the hatred."

Throughout the experiences shared, there was a lot of overlapping rhetoric regarding not feeling 'Indian' enough to publicly express Indian culture without receiving criticism. This highly contributes to the makeup of one's ethnic identity, as Indo-Caribbean Americans feel pressure to prove their culture's worth and celebrate their community in the face of constant judgement, *"in my hometown of Queens, the South Asians do not mix with the Caribbeans, they do business, but you can feel their disgust when they speak to you. We stay out of each other's way. In college, I have constantly seen my identity be taken and used for "fun" and to make jokes, for our accent, our ways, our culture. We were told we could not be a part of South Asian culture on so many occasions. We were told it was not a part of our identity by South Asians. This has caused the identity crisis I already struggle with every single day to be even harder. I am cautious about what I say and who I say it too. I am not comfortable in my own skin and I feel like everywhere I turn there is someone telling me these things I have grown up knowing is not mine."*

I find that the experiences that my participants had with discrimination within the South Asian American community were the most salient in understanding the development of the first-generation Indo-Caribbean ethnic identity in America. The need to prove oneself and find acceptance within one's skin is very incentivizing for creating cultural communities, learning about one's motherland, and ultimately becoming a driving force in one's life.

Conclusions and Implications

Elizabeth Jaikaran (2017) describes the Indo-Caribbean American experience as "the mother of all hyphenated identities and an illustration of a historic journey from India to the

Caribbean." Conceptualizing twice migration history reveals hidden traumas that impact the ethnic identity of the Indo-Caribbean American in ways that are at once universalizable and deeply unique. Through research that examines the concept of twice migration in the Indo-Caribbean American community, my paper examined the history of the migration of Indian servants in indenture, and how their movement across the globe created diasporic communities that must grapple with this history in identifying themselves ethnically. In an attempt to identify the primary influences for the development of this rapidly evolving culture, I proposed three possible theories that contribute to the development of the ethnic identity: having confusion over their identity and seeking to educate themselves in order to understand themselves more, facing discrimination within the South Asian community and educating themselves about their culture in order to combat this, and having either a positive or negative relationship with their homelands and seeking education about it either due to love and familiarity or to longing and incompleteness.

After establishing these three possible answers, I recruited a voluntary sample of college-aged Indo-Caribbean Americans who filled out a questionnaire asking about their experiences and feelings towards their heritage and identity. This data allowed me to understand which out of the three possible answers had the most relevance in the population's view of their ethnic identity, and allowed me to conclude that the *experiences* that Indo-Caribbean Americans face are more salient in influencing the creation of ethnic identity than internal struggles like feeling confused between their three worlds, or having a weak relationship with one's homeland. Because there is a lack of representation and awareness about the history of the Indo-Caribbean community, first-generation Americans are forced to constantly explain themselves and are rarely accepted by ethnic communities other than their own, "this is a phenomenon that I know is

common to the immigrant experience overall: this sense of comfort one feels when they find one of their own in situations where they are confronted by their otherness." (Jaikaran, 2017) To associate with others in the community means not having to explain oneself; we crave to be understood in the context of where we have come from.

The last question in the questionnaire asked participants if they felt driven or motivated by their ethnic identity. The responses were almost unanimously positive, with participants citing being inspired by their immigrant parents' sacrifice and work ethic and being appreciative of the opportunities they are afforded in America, as one participant explains, *"To know that my people share such a complex, traumatic, beautiful, resilient existence - and it is only the beginning - means that I am made from the same recipe. It is my duty to honor the sacrifices generations before made, whether through their slavery and poverty or their immigration and assimilation."* and another states, *"it's always been about honoring my family, community, and representing and preserving who we are, how we got here, and where we will go."* And I think that these sentiments are ones that all first-generation Americans can share; at the end of the day, we are deeply appreciative of the work that has been done by our ancestors to get us to where we are today. We are our ancestors' greatest dream, and understanding our history encourages us to honor the many sacrifices that have brought us here.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Please answer the following six questions to the best of your ability. Feel free to refrain from answering any questions that you are not comfortable sharing. Your name will remain anonymous within the research project.

Name:
Age:
Location:
Occupation:

1) What is your ethnicity? Where are your parents from?

2) How would you define your identity? Do you feel, or have you ever felt, confused about it?

3) How have you engaged with your heritage from childhood? As an adult?

4) What is your relationship with your motherland? Has this relationship influenced the way that you view your identity?

5) Have you experienced discrimination within the South Asian community? If so, in what ways? How did these experiences influence your view of your identity?

6) Do you feel that you are driven by your identity? In what ways does your identity motivate you?

Findings

Name	Gender	Age	Location	Occupation	Ethnicity	Confusion about identity	Discrimination in South Asian community	Relationship to Motherland
Participant A	Male	21	Valley Stream, NY	Student	Guyanese-American	No	No	Never visited, positive
Participant B	Male	23	Richmond Hill, NY	Data Entry	Guyanese-American	No	No	Never visited, positive
Participant C	Female	19	Queens, NY	Student	Guyanese-American	Confused when filling out race	Yes, examples	Visited twice, positive
Participant D	Female	22	Long Island, NY	Visitor Experience Team Leader	Trinidadian-American	No	Yes, examples	Goes very often, positive
Participant E	Male	24	Copiague, NY	Code Enforcement Officer + Military Police	Trinidadian-American	No	No real contact	Visited once, indifferent
Participant F	Male	23	Queens, NY	Ophthalmic Technician, Medical Intern, Student	Guyanese-American	Confused when filling out race	Yes, examples	Visited three times, positive
Participant G	Female	22	Queens, NY	Student	Guyanese-American	Yes	Yes, examples	Visits often, positive
Participant H	Male	23	Long Island, NY	Licensed Sales Producer	Guyanese-American	No	Yes, examples	Never visited, positive
Participant I	Female	24	Long Island, NY	Marketing Assistant at DNC	Trinidadian-American	Yes	Yes, examples	Goes very often, positive
Participant J	Male	21	Queens, NY	Student	Guyanese-American	No	No	Never visited, positive
Participant K	Female	22	Mount Vernon, NY	Student	Guyanese-American	Confused when filling out race	Yes, examples	Born there, positive
Participant L	Female	20	Valley Stream, NY	Student	Guyanese-American	Yes	Yes, examples	Visited once, positive