Dialogic festivity: tourism, diaspora, and the hybridization of being and becoming

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DIALOGIC FESTIVITY:
TOURISM, DIASPORA, AND THE HYBRIDIZATION OF BEING AND BECOMING

By

Heidi J. Nicholls

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

This research is centered on touristic performances, diaspora studies, and hyphenated identities in general and the Indian diaspora in particular. This project looks to the co-construction of identity within the Indian diaspora as is experienced by the Indian international student attending cultural events and festivities or Third Spaces, produced by the Indian diaspora at large, through a theoretical lens of tourism. In other words, this project is an investigation through ethnographic research and narrative analysis, of the interface between cultural festivals, diasporic tourism, and hybridized identities. In turn this research addresses the duality of identity negotiation in the diaspora in connection to Third Spaces and the hybridized process of being and becoming, highlighting the importance of extended community networks to new arrivals. This project not only broadens understanding of new arrivals’ immersion experiences and identity negotiations but also looks to the role and potential of appropriate international student service planning.
Introduction

This research is interested in the co-construction of identity within the Indian diaspora as is experienced by Indian international students attending cultural events and festivities produced by the Indian diaspora at large. Members of this research highlighted statements of the importance of participating as a way being a part of a community, indicating a felt need of experiencing a piece of home through elements of these festivals such as the music, songs, and dance, satisfying one’s own spiritual self, obtainable through a form of cultural tourism. It is this longing or felt need to what appears to be a reaffirming of self and group identity that is the focus of this research, a space of creating a sense of home abroad. Being home abroad is the focus of this research and it is through the festivals addressed in this research that I am interested in the performance of identity.

My research began not initially as research but as a participant. During my career as a graduate student at SUNY University at Albany, I was the graduate student president for two years and was afforded the opportunity to participate in multiple student organizations’ events. I was approached by the president of the Indian Student Organization (ISO), to partake in the annual Diwali festival of 2010. The president had heard I had been a dancer and wanted to know if I would be willing to perform as a member of one of their dance groups for the festivities. The members of ISO wanted to
create more visibility for their organization on campus and incorporate nonmembers as part of their show. Excited for an opportunity to learn a new form of dance and to assist one of our graduate student organizations, I agreed.

Although I studied dance and participated in a dance company and dance troupe as an undergraduate, I had put aside my love to perform in order to pursue my academic career goals. During this time I was bogged down with writing grant proposals, studying for my doctoral exams, working as a teaching assistant, and focusing on my administrative duties as president of the graduate student body. Being offered a chance to partake in a cultural performance represented an opportunity to step outside of my everyday humdrum and tap into a past passion of mine while meeting new people. Little did I know that my academics, administrative duties, teaching, and love for dance were going to collide, and in turn produced the research that led to this dissertation.

My First Diwali

My first day of practice took place one evening in one of the lecture center classrooms of the University at Albany. I had finished grading my students’ lab reports on Human Evolution and had been working on my application for the Wenner Gren cultural anthropology dissertation improvement grant. At that time I had been looking at issues of performance of identity as expressed by tour guides in Canyon de Chelly on the
Navajo Reservation. As it was time for practice, I packed up my office and headed to the agreed upon meeting space. I had no idea what to expect; what kind of dancing would I be doing? Who were the other participants? What will my costume look like?

My group consisted of three young men and three young women; two young men from India, one from Pakistan, a young woman from England of Indian parentage, myself, and one more female of Jewish decent I recruited from the anthropology department. It was originally planned for a choreographer to meet with us and teach us a piece to perform. However, our choreographer was concerned about the diverse make up of our group as well as timing concerns, which led him to decide to no longer participate. This left our hodge-podge group to try and come up with a dance on our own along with two other young men from India who offered to help us with the music mixing and song suggestions. At this point my only understanding of Diwali was what was presented to me by the president of ISO and the blanket statements by ISO members, including four of my fellow dancers and two technical assistants I had not met until that first day, “it’s the festival of lights”...”our Christmas”... “our New Years”... “only our biggest celebration”. Having such little background knowledge of the festival itself, and essentially none on Indian dancing techniques, I now found myself in a position of expectation to be a contributing member of a dance group and I was lost.
What did I do? I did what any good doctoral student and cultural anthropologist would do…I began to research. I watched Bollywood dance videos, YouTube tutorials on traditional Indian dance, and read about the history of Indian dance performance. I observed during the first couple of days of practice, I listened to the songs the four core members presented, and watched as they free style danced to each of the songs. Possessing an obvious language barrier, I would access the English translations of the songs suggested for our performance in order to be somewhat competent when we would meet. Eventually I participated, I mimicked the moves of my peers and attempted ones I had seen in the movies and on YouTube. As time went on, our group coalesced various suggestions from one another and created a seven-minute dance compilation.

The performances were held in the recital hall of the Performing Arts Center (PAC) on campus. There were skits set to famous folk songs, singers singing classics of the 1950s and 1960s, and dances ranging from traditional in nature to Bollywood hits. Audience members, dressed in saris (a female garment consisting of 2-9 yards of cloth wrapped and draped over the body), lenghas (an elaborate female garment consisting of a fitted blouse and skirt ranging from the knee length to floor length), and kurtas (a male garment consisting of a long tunic top, often to the knees, and fitted pants often referred to as pajama pants), chatted excitedly with one another, throwing out catcalls, cheering
on performers, and singing along to their favorite songs. At the close of the performance, a large portion of the audience came up on stage and danced together as the house lights came on. With closing remarks everyone was encouraged to join the executive board and guests of honor for dinner in the Campus Center.

Transition from Participant to Researcher

It was during dinner that I first began to wonder about Diwali as a festival and the role of these festivals in the identity formation of international Indian students. Comments were made by group members, other participants, and audience members about the marked differences between the celebration of Diwali in the States and Diwali in India. There were talks about missing firecrackers and strings of lights, the music and dancing, and most importantly family and friends. One member of our group explained that he hoped the following year he would be able to return to India for Diwali. He was supported by agreeing head nods and excited chatter sharing what they would do first if they were to go. Another individual at our table calmly and cautiously stated “be careful what you wish for…you can never really go home again”.

The graduate student of Computer Science explained that he had been afforded such an opportunity the year before and quickly learned that he no longer fully belonged in his hometown. Others shared similar stories about how people commented that they
now had an accent or no longer did things the ‘Indian way’. “Its funny, I go home and they say I sound American, but here [in the US] I am constantly having to repeat myself because of my Indian accent”. A member of our group shared “even though we are the outsiders here…you get use to the way of life here…and when you go back you feel like a bit of an outsider there”. Clearly disappointed in these stories, those who had not been able to return home asked “what do you do? You don’t belong here…you don’t belong there”. The graduate student of Computer Science optimistically responded with “you participate”. A woman at a nearby table overheard this conversation that I later learned was a board member of TRICIA, leaned over to our group and said, “you create your own space”.

This Research

At the time I had no intention of ‘researching’ my friends, let alone concepts of the diaspora and identity, but I knew what I had witnessed was interesting and a curious scenario to me. Over the course of the next year, I continued to participate in ISO events and stayed connected with my fellow group members, hanging out socially, learning ‘kitchen cricket’ (a modified version of the game played indoors; discussed in Chapter 4), learning to make ‘proper’ chai, and being taught words that made people laugh. I continued to work on my own research at that time on identity, performance, and tourism
but found some interesting similarities regarding my experiences of Diwali and other ISO sponsored events with the literature I was focused on. By the time the next Diwali came around and I was asked to participate once again, I began to consider delving further into the phenomenon of neither belonging here nor there. Through attending and observing at other Indian sponsored events, Indian international students seemed to engage in tourist like behaviors such as photographing the space and performances, pointing our decorative features, and engaging with hosts with a degree of unfamiliarity. I became increasingly interested in what impact, if any, these cultural events had on members of the Indian international student community.

Just from my initial observations, there appeared to be a sense that as an international student, one does not belong here in the community at large nor the more intimate diasporic community, but neither truly fits back in India. There appeared to be a pattern in the stories that addressed the importance of participating in cultural events as a means to create a space in which one can belong. Ultimately it appeared that this space is neither like that of home nor that of the community at large, but rather a third space, a space of hybridization. The objective of this research is to understand how Indian international students relate to and utilize cultural festivals as a means of creating a space in which to belong.
Research Methodology

The focus of this research is international Indian students at the University at Albany and the impact of festivals on their identity formation. As I discussed above, I first began to observe and ask questions approximately three years ago in 2010. However, it was not until Diwali 2011 that this research began to take an official form. Since 2011, I have attended and participated in eleven formal festivals and pujas and close to one hundred cricket events. While the observations and connections I made from these events were vital to my research, it was the participants in this projects that breathed life into my observations and questions.

Sampling

This research was limited to the University at Albany international Indian students during the years 2010-2013 [see Box 5.1 for enrollment numbers]. As discussed above, I was already participating in these cultural events for a year before this research came to fruition. During this time I had become a peripheral part of this community through my role as president of the Graduate Student Organization, performer, and friend. Once this project took shape, I worked with the Indian Student Organization, providing informational announcements through their listserv, Facebook page, and the Graduate Student Organization listserv, about my presence and goals, using the
'big net approach’ (Creswell 1998, Fetterman 1989, Hill 1993) and interacting with as many members of both with ISO and the larger diasporic community as possible. I eventually triangulated my sampling techniques through criterion sampling (Hammersley & Atkinson 1993), opportunistic sampling (Miles & Huberman 1994), and snowball sampling (Bernard 2011, Creswell 1998).

Participants

I worked with more than 80 different Indian international students during the course of these two and a half years, in these public pujas (festivals of worship), ISO events, and cricket games. However my formal research was through interviews and group discussions with 30 students. The participants of this research ranged from 19 to 39 in age, with the average being 24. They represented 12 different states and one National Capital Territory [Refer to Box 0.1 and Box 0.2], speaking a total of 12 languages [Refer to Box 0.3]. There were 3 undergraduate students, all male, and 27 graduate students, 7 of which were female, potentially creating a gendered bias and something to explore in future research projects. 28 of the participants identified as Hindu (in varying degrees of religiousness) and two as Muslim. I have chosen to keep all identities anonymous, as they are students of the same institution from which I am submitting this dissertation. The pictures of individuals in this research are not necessarily of participants I interviewed,
but are participants of these public spaces and have given their permission (any photo not
taken by me is noted with photo credits).

**Box 0.1: States of India**

![States of India](image)

*Note: The map only shows areas actually controlled by India as states. Territories, other than the National Capital Region [marked by a "O"], are not included.*
Data Collection

My research employed multiple data collection methods in order to illuminate and examine the interface between cultural festivals and the process of being and becoming.

This research emerged when I was a participant in these cultural events. Over the course of this investigation, I have vacillated between the two extremes of observer (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995), quietly watching events from the back of the room, to a full participant (Brand 2006) not only performing at these events, but actively
choreographing, teaching, and assisting in the production of these venues, but predominately working from the space in the middle.

The bulk of this research regarding participants’ perspectives was collected through interviews (Krueger 1994, Morgan 1988, Creswell 1998); semi-structured, open ended, and focus groups. I utilized both semi-structured and open ended one on one interviews as a means to collect stories that reflected cultural and personal themes. The semi-structured interviews asked participants questions about where they grew up, languages they spoke, festivals they attended and differences from how they are celebrated here versus back in India. Individual conversations were further brought to life through the use of focus groups (Creswell 1999, Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). These group conversations allowed participants to challenge and encourage one another, which generated dynamic emergent themes that connected to the individual interviews.

These semi-structured, open ended, and group conversations, served as a means to eventually create a space for individual narratives to unfold. The narratives are an “important means of fixing meaning of events and of the social and cultural construction of reality” (Cihodariu 2012:27). They served as a tool for investigating social reality (Bold 2012), attaching insight to the diasporic experience (Cihodariu 2012), and making sense of the various social events and settings (Bold 2012).
The Process

Over the course of two years we worked one on one conducting in-depth interviews, asking questions and having the ability to share information some felt more comfortable sharing privately. We would meet for group discussions lasting for hours, typically resulting in impromptu dinners and chats over tea (chai). We would link up at events and check in on thoughts, opinions, expectations, and self-observations. Through our discussions, themes would emerge about the various cultural events I was focused on. However, there were many discussions addressing moving to Albany, finding a roommate, food, language, and family, all of which are addressed below, providing insight into this negotiating of identities. There was also the need to contextualize their religious beliefs and practices, mainly in addressing temples, both the Mandir (formal structure for worship) and at home, as the majority of the cultural events addressed in this research are pujas or poojas (prayer rituals and worship festivals).

Temple: Home and Mandir

“An act of worship, or puja, might occur at a home altar as well as in a temple” (Khandelwal 2002:80). When talking with the participants of this research, everyone mentioned their temple. At first I was confused and thought they were referencing their space of worship within a formal institution. My participants quickly corrected me and explained a temple refers to their collection of religious relics kept at home for their
person and sometimes-daily prayers, what anthropologists would refer to as a personal altar. I asked what the difference was, if any, between using the term temple in place of the word altar and temple when referencing a building devoted to worship. They explained the Hindi word is technically Mandir, but when talking to non-Hindus, it is easier to use the term temple interchangeably for both an informal structure of worship their homes as well as the formal structure of worship outside of their housing.

*Mandir*

Many of the pujas and festivals discussed in this research have either been held at a Mandir or sponsored by the Mandir (discussed further in Chapter 4). Beyond attending these celebrations and worships, many of the participants have attended the Mandirs in the area for their formal prayers. While some have attended the Hindu Temple Society of Capital District, also known as the Albany Hindu Temple, a temple for all sects of Hinduism, others have sought out Mandirs that serve specific sects or cater to particular language groups, such as the Gujarat Mandir, the Shri Swamiarayan Mandir, or the Sikh Temple.

When asked what were the major differences of their Mandir practices from India to those in United States, attendance and reason for attending were repeated. “In India I go once a week with my family…I had to”. Their answers about frequency of attendance
in the United States ranged from every week to once in three months. When asked why
the decreased frequency there was a feeling that for once they had a choice as is
illustrated when one individual responded “back at home I am forced to go….here I have
a choice and sometimes I simply choose not to go and I wanted to see what it was like to
not go”. However, the overwhelming response was an expressed desire to attend but that
sometimes it proved difficult due to the lack of transportation, involvement with studies,
and the option to save time and pray at home.

With the choice of praying at home (as discussed below), difficulties of
transportation, and time limitations, I was curious as to what propelled them to go. The
reasons ranged from it being their religious duty, to food, language, and parents. “My
parents call me every week to as they say ‘encourage’ me to go and I know they are
going to ask the following week if I went...so I go”. Another individual explained that at
first they went for their parents, but felt a piece of home while being there and stated “I
go because of the energy of the people around you….I now go because I feel like I want
to be there”. This last statement prompted another series of responses of individuals
explaining that being in the United States makes their religion more important…that it
brings them closer to home.
Even for those who did not express a greater sense of being religious, they identified elements of attending the Mandir as fulfilling a sense of home abroad through food, language, and community. “At the Mandir, whether it be for festivals or worship, food is offered to those who attend…and man it feels good to eat that food…our food” (discussed more in depth below). Others shared that they were around people speaking Hindi, and in some cases Gujarati, Punjabi, and Maharati. Hearing the tongues of home seemed to evoke a sense of belonging and a temporary relief from the English of their classmates and academic readings.

Finally there were narratives that demonstrated a feeling of community beyond food and language, but simply being around people of a similar background. This sense was expressed when participants said “going there is a chance to see faces that look similar to those I used to pass by in the streets” or “sometimes at the temple they may be focused on a tradition we are not from, but its more similar to home than being at the university…people ask where are you from and I say my city not my country” and “at the Mandir there are people who look like you…you are a member of the crowd rather than the kid from India”. It was through this sense of connectedness that participants also identified opportunities of networking and support.
Outside of the Mandirs, the majority of the participants in my research had their own personal space of worship. During our interviews many would show me their temples and explained to me each of their idols, pictures, and offerings that were placed out. They tended to be tucked in a corner of their bedroom on the floor, explaining that they needed to be conscientious about the cleanliness of the space and not walking in their shoes in front of their collection of sacred objects. Some individuals only possessed an item or two, what they perceived as too few for their own personal space of worship, and found a home for their sacred objects within a roommate’s temple, accessing their friend’s altar for their prayers. In some of the homes, a temple was erected in the kitchen for all to access and as Madhulika Khandelwal (2002) wrote “regarded as one of the
purest and cleanest places in a Hindu home, a kitchen [is] deemed a suitable place for communion with gods” (80).

There were others in the group who pointed out that they do not possess their own altar, but instead pictures, reciting gitas, and charity work served the same purpose. Whether they have their own temple or not, many individuals carry pictures of deities or religious figures in their wallets or purse, being able to access their images when they found themselves in need. Others said they carry the importance of god(s) in their head or heart where they can escape to anytime throughout the day. Many discussed the practice reciting the gita, a portion of one of the sacred texts of Hinduism, explaining that through their recitations they are reminded of the sacred texts and importance of the acting selflessly. Similarly, acts of charity were identified as “ways of being sincere in your work and preaching god”. Those who engaged in charitable deeds identified actions such as feeding a stray dog, tutoring children, to rebuilding an old computer and gifting it to a poor family. Whether at their temples, through gitas and charity work, looking at religious images, or closing their eyes, participants ranged from their personal pujas from 2 times a day to at least a few times a week just to give thanks and to remind themselves where they came from, and predominately while they are at home.
Home

All but one of the participants in this research clearly stated that the housing arrangements were a major concern for them. As an international student, you are committing a minimum of two years to complete your graduate study abroad and may not get to visit your home country during this period due to time pressures and finances. In turn it was expressed that there is an anxiety of not only going to a new place, but to ensure one’s comfort during a prolonged stay. When asked what they were anxious about in particular four major categories emerged; roommates, family, food, and language.

Roommate

The major source of anxiety was the question of who to live with. Some of the participants shared that they had never interacted with a non-Desis (Desi is a term to refer to people of South Asia such as Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis). For a few participants, I was their first non-Desi friend, or the first to be invited into their homes, share meals, and spend time together. They explained that either they had experiences that led them to believe non-Desis were unfriendly or had heard stories from family and friends who had spent time abroad. There was also a shared perception that non-Desis did not accept their religious practices, smells of foods, or would become an eventual distraction from their studies.
As discussed in Chapter 4, ISO offers housing placement assistance, providing an excel sheet that asks your home state, what languages you speak, your major, and if there are any particular requests. Some individuals’ sole concern was living with another Indian and some indicated a stipulation to live in an all guys home or all girls home. Others were interested in linking with other people from their state for language and religious purposes, while others focused on their major as an opportunity for study support. In the end, everyone identified their roommates as serving the role of their family.

*Family*

Being apart from their families, people discussed the need to call their parents everyday or every other day. When asked if this was because of being homesick, I was answered with “no, this is a product of having Indian parents” followed by a roaring group laughter. They explained that it is considered typical of Indian parents to need to not only check and connect with their children, but to make sure to tell them to do their prayers, see what food they are eating, and remind them of their traditional Indian ways. It was further explained that particularly for parents who had never been in the United States, there is a perception that it is dangerous and wild, that there are perpetual parties,
boys and girls who wish to distract them, and that they will deviate from their vegetarian upbringing.

Knowing that most of them would not be returning to their families during the course of their academic career, except for possibly a month or two visits in the summer, everyone expressed a desire and need to create a family atmosphere abroad. Comments were made about the sense of isolation in the United States from a community with statements such as “no one rings your doorbell” or “no one stops to catch up with one another on the road”. Stories were shared about how in India you see your family, extended family, and friends a few times a week minimum and sometimes daily. That people meet one another on the street, in the markets, or have impromptu get-togethers at one another’s houses. “In India we come home at the end of the day and congregate…we share, we gossip, we laugh…its our roommates we do that with now”. In response someone exclaimed “even through we are from different backgrounds, we are all family, and will be forever”…in other words, they break bread together, daily.

*Food*

Food is a source of concern on the religious level, the individual level, and the social level. On an Individual level, participants expressed a sense of creating home abroad through the practice of cooking. The majority of the participants never had to
cook for themselves prior to coming to the United States. With limited resources on campus, vehicles to get to the closest Indian/Pakistani restaurant, and money to eat out, they had to learn to start cooking at home. I asked how they learned to cook and the responses came with giggles and sly smiles. They shared stories of being on the phone or Skype with their parents as they walked them through the recipes. Others showed me YouTube instructional cooking videos in Hindi of chefs making their favorite dishes from home. It was also a social process as friends who did know how to cook would teach one another their favorite dishes, often times resulting in learning to make and eat dishes from other parts of India from where they each came.

On the religious level, many of the students who come to the United States from India are Hindu. One component of Hinduism is the absence of meat in one’s diet. All but four of the participants I spoke with, were vegetarian when they arrived, and two of those four were Muslim. Participants expressed the vegetarian non-vegetarian dichotomy as a determinant factor in wanting to live with an Indian roommate, “keeping it less complicated”. When I asked about the participants who lived in predominately Hindu households but were not Hindu, I was answered back with “but they understand Indian food and respect our [Hindu] beliefs”.
I probed a little deeper on the idea of “understanding Indian food” since a simple answer of cooking vegetarian did not seem to suffice. After a series of conversations, people also started to share that they felt as though Americans think their food stinks and in turn their homes and clothing hence the increased desire to live with other Indians. However, the overall response was the need for a family style dinner. As was addressed above, people in India come home to their families and friends and talk about their day, catch up on news, and relax together. They explained that during the day, there are very few vegetarian options on campus and none that represent foods they are used to. Living with other Indians meant an understanding of a desire to connect over meals. In most of the households, the roommates took turns preparing dishes, but always enough for everyone. “If I have 10 rotis and 10 people are over, everyone gets one roti”.

Language

And finally, there is language. This category fits into all three of those above but deemed its own heading as it was continuously expressed with statements such as,

- “I learned English but its different when you depend on it”
- “Sometimes you just need a break from trying to think in English”
- “Speaking Hindi is like speaking to a piece of home”

Many individuals who had not studied as part of their undergraduate career in the United States talked about the process of thinking in Hindi and needing to translate their
thoughts to English words. They explained that this not only was mentally time consuming and stressful, but produced a level of social anxiety and insecurity when needing to communicate to non-Hindi speakers. This meant living with other Hindi speakers, studying with other Hindi speakers, and participating in social and religious events with other Hindi speakers, offered a sense of mental relief and requiescence. Not all of the participants in this research identify themselves as fluent Hindi speakers; some did not grow up speaking Hindi in their homes, or come from a region in India where their local language is used in school rather than Hindi. However each of these individuals knew enough to communicate and explained that it is at least better to talk in a language from home that they are not as at ease with than to not speak it all; it is still a piece of home, a connector to one another.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research project is an investigation of the interface between cultural festivals, diasporic tourism, and hyphenated identities. This project focuses on members of the Indian Diaspora and their relationship to cultural festivals, paying attention to participation as a means to create a sense of home abroad. It is the goal of this research to explore the role of these festivals in relation to diasporic communities, domestic tourism, and a sense of "belonging and becoming". 
Chapter One outlines and describes the role of the participants in this research, international Indian students, as members of the Indian diaspora. The Indian diaspora is an example of the heterogeneous nature of the current status of diasporas, deriving from political and geographical origins (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), often in combination with religious and ethnic schisms (Hannam 2004). “Any diaspora is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon but all are characterized by a desire to endure as a distinct collective despite spatial dispersal, and such hyphenated communities invest considerable psychological and social energy into maintaining expressions of their identity” (Morgan & Pritchard 2004:232). It is these expressions of identity through festivals that this paper will focus on through the lens of tourism.

Nelson Graburn’s (1989, 2004) personal transformative experience, social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor 1973), and rites of passage (Turner 1969), this research is able to look to the phenomenological process of moving from the ordinary to the space of rejuvenation and renewal (Nash 1989) motivated by the desire to make up for perceived shortcomings (Berlyne 1968). The motivations, or felt needs (Graburn 2004, MacCannell 1999), highlight the desire to reaffirm the self and group cultural bonds (Timothy & Teye 2004) which are associated with costs and rewards (Stebbins 1996) of reification and revival of cultures (Martin 1998, Little 2004, Castaneda 2003) through social exchange theory (Gursoy & Rutherford 2004).

Tourism in this research is a lens through which to examine and understand the hybridization of identity formation amongst the diaspora within the contexts of presentation of the collective self. It is the performance of diverse cultural rituals and routines that contributes to a sense of ethnic identity (Bhatia 2007:78). Tourism creates a space, a stage (Goffman 1959), empty meeting ground (MacCannell 1992), borderzone (Bruner 2004), where diasporic groups are able to re-make and legitimize both self (Stylianou & Lambert 2011) and the group (Hollinshead 2004) through incorporation of memory of home abroad while creating new memories here (Coles & Timothy 2004, Duval 2004).
Hybridization and Third Spaces

Descriptive Analysis

Chapter Four looks at these Third Spaces, outlining the various cultural events attended by the participants in this research as well as introducing the stakeholders responsible for producing these events. This portion of the research is more descriptive in nature, describing these spaces, the religious and cultural significances of these particular festivals, and the reality of their practice abroad. Narratives of the participants are interwoven into the expressions of how these festivals differ from home to abroad and how it is internalized. For analysis purposes, I look to the themes that emerge from the interviews, observations, and performances during the festivals in Chapter Five using the diaspora, tourism, and Third Space identity literature. It is from this analysis that closing statements are made, how this research is situated in the literature at large, and suggestions are offered for the various stakeholders impacted by these observations.

Conclusion

This research is centered on touristic performances, diaspora studies, and hyphenated identities in general and the Indian Diaspora in particular. Ultimately, investigating the duality of identity negotiation in the diaspora in connection to festivals can shed light on the importance of an extended community to new arrivals. This investigation can further inform international study programs, diasporic community
agencies, and non-profits, lending a voice to the importance and social relevance of culturally situated social networks. The strength of this project is its contribution of linking Third Space identity development to diasporic and anthropological tourism research. This research not only broadens understanding of new arrivals' immersion experiences and identity negotiations but also looks to the role and potential of appropriate international student service planning.
Chapter 1: Diasporas

During practices for my first Diwali, I asked a group of participants I was sitting with what made them choose to study in the United States. Most explained that receiving a degree from the States is prestigious and gives you options to work globally or that they had family members who also studied here. However, one individual said, “Heidi, it’s like this…I’m just another ‘brain drainer’”, prompting the group to burst into laughter. This self identification of being a part of the brain drain (discussed in detail below) occurred throughout many of the one on one interviews with participants sharing their thoughts on the matter, but also making it clear I needed to think about Indian international students in a broader context, as members of a diaspora.

This research is focused on international Indian students as members of the larger Indian diaspora, the role cultural events have on their identity formation, and the importance of the extended diasporic social network in creating a home abroad. International students have not traditionally been incorporated into the discussion of the larger diasporic communities in diaspora studies literature. This chapter walks the reader through a brief explication of the term diaspora and diasporic theories, focusing in on the
Indian diaspora in particular, and ultimately demonstrates how Indian international
students fit into the larger overarching Indian diasporic community.

Diaspora Defined

The term diaspora originates from the Greek roots of ‘dia’-meaning across and
‘sperien’- meaning to sew or scatter seeds (Liddell, Scott, Jones, and Mckenzie 1966,
Brazier and Mannur 2003, Cohen 1997). The term diaspora is glossed as a scattering or
dispersion and today denotatively means a scattered population with a common origin in
a small geographic area (Ember, Ember & Skoggard 2004). When looking up the word
diaspora in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, you will find definitions such as a group of
people who live outside the area in which they had lived for a long time or which their
ancestors live, or the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an
established or ancestral homeland.

With a capitalized D, Diaspora is defined as ‘the settling of scattered colonies of
Jews outside of Palestine after the Babylonian exit...the area outside of Palestine settled
by Jews...the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel” (http://www.merriam-
webster.com/dictionary/diaspora). It is suggested that, while the denotative meaning of
the term diaspora is separate from the meaning now immortalized in most dictionaries
and the forefront of conversations touching on the Diaspora, the widely accepted
connotative meaning can be attributed to the Hebrew Bible (Septuagint) which first connected the notion of diasporas and the Jewish exile (Liddell, Scott, Jones, and Mckenzie 1966). This understanding of Diaspora was broadened and referred to as Classic Diasporas, reaching beyond the Jewish population to include the Greek and Armenian Diaspora (Brubaker 2005, Clifford 1994). George Shepperson (1966) introduced the notion of the African Diaspora, “by expressly engaging the Jewish experience” (Brubaker 2005:2), and further assisted in expanding of the definition of diaspora.

James Clifford (1994) argued in support of this ever-growing definition by stating “we should be able to recognize the strong entailment of Jewish History on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model” (306). Eventually, more groups were incorporated under the umbrella of being diasporic in nature; the Palestinian Diaspora referred to as a catastrophic (Burbaker 2005) or victim diaspora (Cohen 1997), the Chinese, Lebanese, and Indian Diaspora referred to as trading diasporas (Brubaker 2005) or mobilized diasporas (Cohen 1997), and ethno national diasporas such as the Italians, Hungarians, and Russians (Burbaker 2005). The term diaspora “proliferated” as Brubaker (2005) points out, in response to intellectual, cultural, and political agendas, with “a dispersion of the meaning of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary
space” (1). In sum, “the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian Dispersion, now shares meaning with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile communities, overseas communities, and ethnic communities” (Tölöyan 1991:4).

Braziel and Mannur (2003) identify diaspora as, “a naming of the other which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” (1). Diaspora in the rapidly changing world we now inhabit speaks to diverse groups of displaced persons and communities moving across the globe. Diasporic conditions are not always voluntary and sometimes marked with a sinister historical connotation (Coles and Dallen 2004) signifying collective trauma, banishment, or living in exile (Cohen 1997).

Robin Cohen (1997) discusses others “who have maintained strong collective identities…though they were neither active agents of colonization nor passive victims of persecution”(ix). The participants in this research would be associated with the latter as neither persecution nor colonization was the impetus for their decision to come to the United States to study. Similarly, a strong collective identity is reflected in various ways such as their choice of roommates. They are Indians moving from their hometowns in India with an intention to study in the States and actively sought out other Indians as
roommates creating a new assemblage of an Indian household. In its simplest form, a diaspora is when a set of circumstances dictates that “people [are] living outside of their traditional homeland” (Mitchell 1997:534) and have been scattered and then regrouped (Braziel & Mannur 2003).

In Roger Brubaker’s article on the ‘Diaspora’s’ Diaspora (2005), he warns us against the dangers of stretching the definition of diaspora too thin where “if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctly so” (3). He goes on to reason that labeling everyone a member of some diaspora, “the term loses its discriminating power…its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions” (3). However, Sunil Bhatia (2007) discusses Tölöyan’s (1996) recognition of globalization leading to an “increase in travel, media, and communication technology; more and more immigrants can be considered to be living in diasporas” (Bhatia 2007:76), and in turn needing a broader definition for the diasporic condition. This then leaves us with the challenge to piece together what then is in fact a diaspora. He, along with other scholars of the diaspora, built their arguments and assertions of what is a diaspora from William Safran (1991).

Safran (1991) outlines the six parts that make a diaspora [as shown in Box 1.1]. When reduced to its parts a diaspora is comprised of its history of movement, collective
**Box 1.1: William Safran’s (1991) Characteristics of a Diaspora Group**

1. Dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral places
2. Maintain a memory, vision, or myth about the original homeland
3. Believe they are not – and perhaps cannot – be fully accepted by host community
4. View ancestral home as a place of eventual return
5. Committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland
6. Groups consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined

myth and memory, a sense of alienation, a desire or intent to return, ongoing support to their ancestral land, and a collective identity (Clifford 1994). Cohen (1997) expands on Safran’s characteristics, identifying 9 common features of a diaspora [Box 1.2]. He

**Box 1.2: Robin Cohen’s (1997) 9 Common Features of a Diaspora (adapted from Coles & Timothy 2004 from Cohen 1997:26)**

1. Dispersal from original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including location, history and achievements
4. An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation
5. The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and belief in a common fate
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group
8. A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism
broadens the idea of group consciousness to also include empathy for other diasporic members, originating from the same ancestral land, and settled abroad elsewhere. Cohen (1997) also introduced the potential of diasporic members’ intentionally moving abroad in pursuit of trade, economics and education. Conversely, Brubaker (2005) takes Safran’s model and trims the core elements to three criteria for a diaspora [Box 1.3]. He reduces collective memory, intent to return, and commitment to ancestral land maintenance to a single category of orientation to homeland. Similarly, he combines Safran’s characteristics to host community acceptance and group consciousness under his criteria of boundary maintenance. He, as did Robin Cohen (1997), maintained the separate category put forth by Safran, dispersion of space. For Brubaker, the ultimate take home point for a diaspora is a firm root in the homeland.

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<tr>
<th>Box 1.3: George Brubaker’s (2005) Criteria for a Diaspora: Three Core Elements</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Dispersion of Space</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A segment, or division (King &amp; Melvin 1999), of people living outside the homeland (Conner 1986).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Orientation to Homeland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective memory or myth about the homeland, ancestral land, with an intent to eventually return. Collectively committed to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland, continuing to related personally or vicariously to the homeland (Safran 1991).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Boundary Maintenance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining or preserving a distinct identity vis-à-vis a host society, sometimes with an unintended and sometimes with an intended social exclusion, often demonstrating a resistance to assimilation.</td>
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When examining various researchers’ explications of the diaspora, it is clear there is a consensus with Brubaker that a key conceptual characteristic of a diasporic group relates to the degree its members still have a common concern for their homeland and shared fate with their own people (Cohen & Kennedy 2000, Stephenson 2004). Tim Coles and Dallen Timothy (2004) assert that these communities define themselves by reference to a distant homeland from which they once originated. This is reflected by the titles of international student organizations such as the Indian Student Organization. However, they also argue that diasporas are drawn together beyond land.

Hall and Duvall (2004) identify a diasporic community as one which has a shared sense of common origins, can claim a common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more dimensions of collective cultural individuals, and maintains sense of collective solidarity. Hague states “a cultural diaspora exists where connections between people are not so much based on shared historical experiences or movement to return home, but rather they are grounded in the belly of common ethnic and cultural origins” (2001:145). Robin Cohen contends that “irrespective of their historical language, religion, customs or folklore- [the homeland] always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions…a members adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history and sense of co-
ethnicity with others from the same background” (1997:ix). In sum, these groups of people are spread worldwide, connected based on perceived and/or real bonds of culture, religion, ethnicity etc, yet define themselves by reference to a distant homeland from which they once originated (Coles & Timothy 2004).

Using Safran’s (1991), Cohen’s (1997) and Brubaker’s (2005) theories of diaspora, this research is able to demonstrate how the participants are members of the diaspora as well as help us to contextualize and understand the cultural events of focus. The members of this research were all dispersed from their homeland (Safran 1991, Cohen 1997, Brubaker 2004) in pursuit of education for their future work much like Cohen’s second feature of a diaspora [Box 1.2]. Their narratives, much like the expressed feeling of being closer to home when at the Mandir in the Introduction and those in Chapter 4, reflect a collective memory of their homeland (Safran 1991, Cohen 1997, Brubaker 2004). Similarly the production of these cultural events illustrate the commitment to maintain their myths and history of home (Safran 1991 [Box 1.1], Brubaker 2005 [Box 1.3] as well as their ethnic group consciousness and distinctiveness as Cohen discusses [Box 1.2]. Finally, the narratives such as “even though they may be focused on a tradition we are not from…its [still] more similar to home than being at the university” along with the diverse composition of performances and attendees at these
festivals, exemplify Cohen’s (1997) sense of solidarity and tolerance for pluralism [Box 1.2] in a diasporic community (Hall & Duval 2004). These expressions are explored in more detail in Chapter 4, while highlighting why these events help us in unpacking these theories in Chapter 5.

**Typologies**

In order to bring to life and recognize the larger experiences of various transnational communities identified as diasporas, Cohen (1997) offers 5 types of diasporas [Box 1.4]. The typologies of victim, colonial, labor, trade, and cultural, attempt to create a diasporic space dependent on historical context or intentions. For example, Cohen differentiates between the labor diaspora with the indentured servant from India who was forced into service as a miner, versus an Indian who came during the “brain drain” (discussed below) as a part of a professional diaspora. In other words, when we

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1.4: Robin Cohen’s 5 Typologies of Diasporas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Victim or Refugee Diaspora</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews, Africans, Armenians, Irish, Palestinians, etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Imperial or Colonial Diaspora</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Greek, British, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Labor or Service Diaspora</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indentured Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Sikhs, Turks, Italians, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Trade, Business, or Professional Diaspora</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venetians, Lebanese, Chinese, Indians, Japanese, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Cultural, Hybrid or Post Modern Diaspora</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean peoples, Chinese, Indians, etc</td>
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look to these diasporic groups, we must note the diversity of judgments or historical contexts dictating their membership into a group (Braziel and Mannur 2003). “All diasporas are different and reflect the specifications of the conditions, histories, new homeland immigration policies, and population sizes” (Timothy & Coles 2004:293).

In order to understand the diaspora, Morgan and Pritchard (2004) state we must look to their physical migrations, kinetics of cultures, stories and myths, as well as their imaginings of self and other within and between groups. In other words, a diaspora, may be comprised of members who share the same typology, such as the majority of the Hungarians in Cleveland Ohio who came after WWI, WWII, and following the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 (Papp 1981), labeling them as members of a victim or refugee diaspora of Hungary. Today their community is still largely comprised of refugees, but also members in pursuit of business and professional opportunities, as well as a cultural diaspora, which gather to perform their Hungarian identity. In the end they are a community separated from their homeland by political frontiers and identify to a homeland tie (Brubaker 2005).

Other groups, such as Indians, have had multiple dispersals around the globe (Cohen 1997), marking various members of the Indian Diaspora with varying typologies (Bhatia 2007), while still maintaining membership in the larger diaspora titled by their
distant homeland reference (Coles & Timothy 2004). This is made evident from the
participants’ homes to the various events focused on in this research. One house was
comprised of members from Karnataka, Kashmir, and Himachali Pradesh, while another
household was made up of residents from Maharashtra, New Delhi, Punjab, and two from
Gujarat [refer to Box 0.1 States of India]. The cultural events both catered to and had
members from different Indian backgrounds including Indians raised in South Africa,
Guyana, and England.

As Coles and Timothy (2004) demonstrate in their research, the boundaries
between typologies are blurred and members may vary within and between their
classifications. “The collective identity of homeland and nation [which] is vibrant and a
constantly changing set of cultural interactions…fundamentally questions the very ideas
of home and host” (Cohen 1997:127) yet creates a space for those who share their
homeland roots (Brubaker 2005) to congregate and belong. “Any diaspora is a complex
and multi-layered phenomenon but all are characterized by a desire to endure as a distinct
collective despite spatial dispersement, and such hyphenated communities invest
considerable psychological and social energy into maintaining expressions of their
identity” (Morgan & Pritchard 2004:232). Such desires are reflected in this research in
the choosing of roommates, the creation of the ‘family’, and the preference in speaking a
language that is not one’s first tongue but is still a piece of home. These expressions are further highlighted through cultural events and are explored in greater depth in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. But first we must understand the community of focus for this research, international Indian students as members of the Indian diaspora.

The Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora is an example of Morgan and Pritchard’s (2004) multilayered and complex phenomenon, comprised of 14-20 million Indians worldwide (Hannam 2004). Hannam (2004) refers to the fragmented nature of experiences and contexts as complications in defining the ‘Indian Diaspora’. Following the definition of a diaspora above, Hannam identifies the importance of understanding the geographical, religious, and linguistic history and origins of members of the Indian diaspora, as they do not simply reference the country but tend to remain attached to religions or states (Lall 2001) (as is illustrated in this research). “The ways in which the Indian migrants understand themselves and give meaning to their lives abroad is intricately connected to this history” (Bhatia 2007:75).

As addressed above, when discussing the Indian Diaspora, it is important to understand the history and contexts from which members dispersed from the homeland (Bhatia 2007). Hannam (2004) provides us with a brief break down in the major
Box 1.5: Hannam (2005) 5 Major Groups of Migrants within the Indian Diaspora and Their Destination

1. Those who left India under the British Colonial System (Cohen 1997) ~Late 1800s-1930
   *South East Asia, Africa, Caribbean, Polynesia*
2. Commercial migrants right before Independence ~ 1920-1960
   *Africa, Australia, Europe, Americas*
3. Low and high skilled migrants left for short term contracts to work in the Middle East ~1970s
4. Brain Drain—higher education and jobs ~ 1960s-Present
   *United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Australia*
5. Others who went to other parts of South East Asia in the Aftermath of Independence
   *Pakistan, Bangladesh*

movements of Indians across the globe in [Box 1.5] and their resulting new homeland. If we take Cohen’s (1997) 5 typologies template [Box 1.4] and overlay his typologies with Hannam’s 5 major groups of migrants within the Indian Diaspora [Box 1.5], it is clear that the Indian diaspora as a whole is comprised of victim/refugee,
trade/business/professional, and cultural/hybrid/postmodern diasporic members [Box 1.6]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hannam’s 5 Major Groups of Migrants Within the Indian Diaspora</th>
<th>Cohen’s 5 Typologies of Diasporas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Colonial System</td>
<td>Labor or Service Diaspora</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Migrants Pre-Independence</td>
<td>Trade, Business, or Professional Diaspora</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low and High Skilled Migrants for Short Term Contracts</td>
<td>Trade, Business, or Professional Diaspora</td>
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<td>and Labor or Service Diaspora</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain Drain</td>
<td>Trade, Business, or Professional Diaspora</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aftermath of Independence</td>
<td>Victim or Refugee Diaspora</td>
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</table>

One destination absent from this list is North America under the British Colonial System. Many Indians, Sikh farmers and military personnel in particular, deserted the
military and took the opportunity to serve as cheap or indentured laborers or migrant farmers along the West Coast (Bhatia 2007, Sharma 2002). Shri J.C. Sharma, the one time Honorable Secretary and Minister of External Affairs in India, addressed the participants of the 2002 International Conference on “Indian Diasporic Experience: History, Culture and Identity”, offering three categories for the Indian diaspora [Box 1.7].

**Box 1.7: Shri J.C. Sharma’s 3 Categories of the Indian Diaspora**

1. **The Colonial Period ➔ Labour Force**
   Imperial leaders took skilled labor for development of plantations and agricultural economies of their territories; poor living conditions, dissolution of the cotton industry ➔ extreme poverty and unemployment
   Post-British abolition of Slavery 1833/1834 ➔ Indentured Service
2. **Professionals, artisans, traders and factory workers ➔ Commerce.**
   India’s semi-skilled and skilled labor into the neighboring countries in the wake of the oil boom and to the First World countries like USA and UK
   Adversity ➔ Opportunity
3. **Professionals and the educated elite of India ➔ Economic Betterment**
   Indian Community in the First world countries has done so well that in US they are often referred to as the ‘model minority ➔ Major Source of Knowledge

In his breakdown of the major Indian dispersals, he identifies the colonial period, which produced a labor force and indentured service, what he identifies as a by-product of colonialism, as well as low skilled or artistic workers, and professionals or cultured elite. As discussed above, he emphasized the importance of understanding these categories in order to understand the Indian diaspora in the US when he stated, “it is
important to understand the history of migration to a particular destination because the current area-wise profile of Indian diaspora depends on the history of emigration”.

**Historical Migrations to the US, the US Government, and the Indian Government**

The first “confirmed” East Indians in the United States were documented in 1790, not here as displaced peoples, but in attempts to set up trade connections (Okihiro 2005). Between 1820 and 1898, 523 Indians were documented to have immigrated to the United States as indentured servants, traveling via merchant and trading ships. Sunil Bhatia (2007) asserts the Indian diaspora in the United States as a whole, emerged as a collective at the turn of the twentieth century and were as a group referred to as ‘The Hindus’ regardless of their religious affiliation. Between 1899 and 1914, Sikh farmers were transplanted from the state of Punjab to California, Oregon, and Washington as indentured servants and migrant workers (Okihiro 2005, Bhatia 2007) on farms, in sawmills, mines, and the railroad companies (IPC 2002). At the turn of the century there were 2,050 persons of Indian origin (IPC 2002), however by 1913, there were more than 7,000 ‘Hindus’ in the United States marking what was referred to as the ‘Hindu Invasion’ or ‘yellow peril’ (IPC 2002).

In 1917, in response to this perceived “invasion”, all Asians were barred from immigrating to the US via the Barred Zone Act. The ruling in 1923 that no East Indian
would be allowed to become a US citizen shortly followed this policy. These last two rulings tempered the migration waves of Indians to the United States, until 1946 when under the Luce Cellar Act, East Indians were allowed to immigrate and go through the Naturalization process, governed by a quota system per country. The new foreign policy allowed for 100 Indians to immigrate to the US and be eligible for citizenship per year, resulting in 6,474 new immigrants from India to arrive in the US between 1946 and 1965 (IPC 2002).

In 1947, when India gained their independence from British rule, Jawaharlal Nehru led India, until 1964. “Under Nehru, India’s priorities had changed from being de-territorialized, anti-colonial, nationalist movement which included Indians from around the world…. [to] a territorialized nation-state project with internal integration as the central priority” (Hannam 2004:249). This resulted in expatriates being viewed to have revoked their Indian Citizenship (Lall 2001) and were no longer acknowledged or supported legally, politically, socially, or economically by their land of origin (Hannam 2004, Bahadur Singh 1979). This disconnect between the Indian diaspora and the Indian government and foreign policy continued until the 1980s. However, during this time, informal ties were maintained between families in India and members of the diaspora (Hannam 2004).
During 1965 in the US, the quota system was lifted, however a stipulation was placed on Indian immigrants when the United States passed immigration laws such as the INS Act of 1965, restricting immigration for Indians to those with professional skills, business interests, and sizable amounts of capital to invest (Vertovec 1991, Van der Veer 1995, Petievich 1999, Hannam 2004). The new stipulations marked a shift in the immigration focus from one based on national origins to one focused on skill (Sahay 2009). “The success story of the post-1965 migrants of the Indian diaspora made them ‘model minorities’ in the United States” (Bhatia 2007:90) and so began the era known as the ‘brain drain’ (Sahay 2009, Bhatia 2007, Hannam 2004).

**Brain Drain**

The brain drain is the “migration of the educated and migration for education” (Sahay 2009:4) from India and China, to the United States, Canada, and Australia started in 1965 until the present. During the first year, more than 20,000 physicians and professionals in the sciences were documented to have left India for Western nations (Khandelwal 2002). In the years following, thousands of professionals were leaving India against India’s governmental pleas, for the United States for advanced training and more economically profitable employment prospects. This ‘exodus’ of highly skilled labor hurt India’s economy, research efforts, and overall development (Bhatia 2007). In the late
1960s and early 1970s, the Association for Service to Indian Scholars (ASSIST) was formed with a mission to persuade Indian professionals to return home and work with the US to encourage a return of their once citizens (Khandelwal 2002). However, due to a laissez-faire policy, national governments are not allowed to interfere with migration (Sahay 2009). Similarly, the internationalist model, which attempts to increase involvement of enterprise in the international market, “holds the perspective that human skills should be put where they can be best utilized” (Sahay 2009:4).

During the 1980’s, the brain drain became an acknowledged phenomenon and source of economic and human capital concern and loss for India. Rajiv Gandhi was the President of India during this period, and recognized the importance of reincorporating the diaspora into India’s governmental interests, proposing the Non Resident Indian (NRI) or Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) status (Hannam 2004). According to the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act, an NRI is someone who holds an Indian Passport or is an Indian citizen who is living abroad indefinitely (Hannam 2004). The Act outlines in greater detail, three identifying definitions for an NRI as are illustrated in [Box 1.8]. Conversely, a PIO has at some point held an Indian Passport, is a descendent of someone who held an Indian Passport, is a partner of an Indian citizen, or a person who has been a permanent resident of India at any time (Hannam 2004). Due to political standing and
geopolitical insecurities, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals are unable to claim PIO (Lall 2001). Neither NRIs nor PIOs have political rights in India, in fear that if they return or gain power, they would corrupt the Indian way of life with bought votes and westernized ideals (Lall 2001, Hannam 2004).

**Box 1.8: Foreign Exchange Regulations Act 1973, adopted from Hannam (2004)**

*An Non Resident Indian (NRI) is…*

1. An Indian citizen who stays abroad for employment, business, vocation, or for any other purpose or circumstance indicating an indefinite period of stay outside of India.
2. An Indian citizen working abroad on assignment with foreign governments, governmental agencies, or international/regional agencies like UNO, IMF, WorldBank
3. An official of the central and state government and public sector undertakings deputy abroad on temporary assignments or posted to their offices abroad, such as Indian Diplomatic Mission

Throughout the 1990s, Indian immigrants represented the 3rd largest foreign-born migrant population totaling more than 1 million (IPC 2002). During this time, the Indian government, which had historically had no formal relationship with their diaspora, began to recognize and seriously consider the India diaspora as a ‘hidden asset’ (Hannam 2004). It was the hope on the part of the Indian Government that the Indian diaspora would begin to invest in the Indian economy, beyond informal ties such as familial remittances (Hannam 2004). However, there were no formally established ties with the Indian diaspora and the Indian government (Lall 2001) and a continued distrust of the “latent

*Turn of the Century*

From 1965 until the turn of the century, Indians were referred to as the ‘model minority’. Sunil Bhatia’s research (2008) examines the psychological impacts of such a label and particularly focuses on how 9/11 upset this label as well as diaspora members’ perceptions of self in the US. His concepts of identity, cultural versus racial (George 1997), are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. But in this section, it is important to make note of the relationship of “mainstream” America and a sense of structural integration (Bhatia 2007, Saha 2012). Another upset during this decade, somewhat spawned by the events of 9/11, was the return to immigration policies reminiscent of the 1940s/50’s and early 60s, re-implementing a quota system via the Comprehensive Immigration Bill (Phadnist & John 2013). Despite these challenges, the number of new Indian immigrants has not decelerated.

Between 2000 and 2010, Indians grew to be the third largest immigrant population behind Mexico and China, averaging about 60,000 new members of the Indian diaspora in the US per year (Office of Immigration Statistics). During this time period
there was a shift in the make up of the incoming Indian diaspora in the US, shifting from an emphasis on people seeking employment to international students coming to study abroad. In 1999 there were 51,000 Indian international students which tripled to more than 153,000 by the mid 2000s (Naujoks 2009) with an average of 75,000 to 100,000 Indian international students in the US in any given year (Project Atlas, USIndian 2013). More than 50% of Indian international students come to the US to study, making up 15% of the total foreign graduate students studying in the US (Unesco 2012, Kumar 2013), an increase from the previous total of 13% in 2011/2012 (Unesco 2012, USIndian 2013). In the last year there was a 40% surge in new international Indian student enrollees, reaching a new high of 220,377, only second to China (Kumar 2013). Economically, this is a strain for India as Indian students going abroad for their higher studies costs India a foreign exchange outflow of $10 billion annually (IANS 2009). However, with the increased efforts of creating a more formalized relationship with the diaspora, international students included, remittances (inflow of private financial transfers both formal and informal) have also increased from $2.1 billion in 1990 to $10 billion in 2000 (Naujoks 2009) and more than $52 billion in 2010 (MPI 2010).

In August 2000, the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora formally identified the role NRIs and PIOs, or rather the Indian diaspora, could play in the
economic development of India. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2: Diasporic Tourism, but it marks an important transition in the relationship between India and their diaspora. In more recent times, sending countries in general and India in particular began to recognize the global benefits of their itinerant skilled labor in raising national human capital, increasing a multi-way flow of knowledge, and potentially a reinvestment in the home country (Sahay 2009). In the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Report in 2001, it was estimated that more than $2 billion per year are lost, due to the emigration of computer experts to places such as the Silicon Valley in California. While this loss is substantial, the Indian government asserted that “their” computer professionals could enhance India’s reputation “making ‘Indian’ a byword for excellence in computing” (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1432702.stm).

Today

Today there are more than 1,780,322 Indian immigrants in the United States (Office of Immigration Statistics 2013), 13% (~230,000) of which are currently enrolled graduate students in the United States. University at Albany international Indian students account for 160 of these 230,000 students. Many of the participants who were preparing for their graduations discussed current immigration legislative policies and their future in this country. One such proposal is the Comprehensive Immigration Reform which will
lift immigration quotas and return to a skill labor clause (Phadnist & John 2013). This reform is an attempt to retain highly skilled foreign-born labor in the US rather than outside (FP Staff 2013). Both in response to retain this ‘brain circulation’ (Tung 2008) and in response to the outcries by the President of India and the current Indian government (Ruiz 2013), President Obama has gone as far as to suggest a green card be stapled to a Masters student’s or PhD student’s of one of the STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) diploma (FP Staff 2013). This would sever a recent international student graduate’s dependency on the employer and fast track them to citizenship.

This Research

This research is focused on the Indian diaspora as an overarching unit but is particularly interested in Indian international students and the creation of space of home abroad. This chapter has addressed the concept of diaspora, the development of the Indian diaspora in the US, as well as policies both domestically and internationally that have influenced the composition of the diaspora. The participants in this research are members of Cohen’s (1997) trade, business and professional diaspora [Box 1.4, Box 1.6], Hannam’s (2005) brain drain [Box 1.5, Box 1.6], and Sharma’s (2002) professional and educated elite in pursuit of economic betterment [Box 1.7], all of which are explored
further in Chapter 5. But “what the descriptive framework of diaspora does not explain is the fact that various members of the diaspora may have different collective representations of the diasporic community and may use different cultural symbols to organize the cultural practices of their homeland” (Bhatia 2007:78).

As has been illustrated in this chapter, the Indian diaspora is an example of the heterogeneous nature of the current status of diasporas, deriving from political and geographical origins (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh), often in combination with religious and ethnic schisms (Hannam 2004). In turn, “the performance of diverse cultural rituals and routines may give rise to a sense of ethnic identity that incorporates notions of race, class, and gender in radically different ways” (Bhatia 2007:78). It is the latter that this research is focused on; performances of identity by and experienced by members of the Indian diaspora in Albany, New York in general and International Indian students in particular… a form of “diasporic tourism” if you will.
Chapter 2: Tourism

The smell and smoke of incense fills the room. There is an orchestra of sounds as little ones chase after one another laughing, the chatter of adults catching up, the sound crew checking mics and music, and metal chairs being repositioned as friends and loved ones attempt to sit together. There are mothers styling their daughters’ hair and straightening their son’s costumes, fathers preparing cameras and bringing their wives chai. Volunteers scurry around the gymnasium and kitchen, adding their final touches and preparing the feast for after the event. Performers gather back stage going over their songs and steps one last time while instructors offer their final pep talks. People filter through the door, paying their $5 admission and make their way to the temple to offer their thanks and prayers to Saraswati. Finally, the host of the event calls for everyone to find their seats and to direct their attention to the stage, the festival is to begin.

Throughout the show, I look around the room. There are family members of the performers, members of the UTSAV (discussed in Chapter 4) organization, members of other organizations that have come to support and celebrate, individuals who are not of Indian origin but maybe are friends with people who are,
others who have simply come out of interest and curiosity, and then there are the international Indian students. During the event they sit together speaking with only one another and have a sense of strangerhood about them in how they interact with others. After the performances, they get their dinner together, they sit and talk with one another, and although more at ease than when they first walked in, there is still a separation between them and members of the various organizations, a level of social distance. Eventually one gentleman comes over and introduces himself, welcomes them, and asks if they are enjoying the event. After a short polite and formal conversation, they say their goodbyes.

I met with the group of students who attended the Saraswati Puja afterward and discussed their thoughts and experiences of the event. The responses for the most part are statements of how nice the event was, how it felt good to be around an event that celebrated a part of Indian culture, and how they enjoyed the performances and food. However, many of the participants explained they had never been to a puja for Saraswati and that while they learned a lot, it was difficult to understand when people spoke in Bengali. As is discussed in Chapter 4 in greater detail, the Saraswati Puja is a part of the first of two spring festivals, the Vasant Panchami or Basant Festival, which are comprised of many parts such as Sankranti
and Holi. However, not everyone in India participates in the Saraswati Puja, which celebrates a deity who holds greater significance in the Bengali region. Of the participants who attended, only one was Bengali. He expressed how it was exciting to share with his friends a piece of his culture.

Until this point in the research, most everyone identified with the 'Indian' culture. While they would reference their hometowns and states, and explain differences religiously, it was not until this conversation I had heard an explicit demarcation between each of their cultures, which continued as a common thread throughout my interviews. This statement made by a Bengali student, was reflective of the heterogeneous composition of India and in turn the make up of the Indian international student body. The participants shared a sense of touring their own culture and being a part of a larger whole by attending these events through statements such as…

• “I have learned more about my country as a whole by going to these festivals”.
• “I’m Rajasthani performing to a Tamil song...who’d a thought?!?”
• “Being here, I get to taste India...even if its not the part of India I am from, its home and I am a part”
• “Going to events here [in the U.S.] is like touring my own culture!”
These types of statements along with observations of participants’ behavior when attending these cultural events led me to frame their pursuit of being and becoming through a lens of tourism.

Diasporic communities are marked by a desire to continue to exist as a collective as well as the social energy they put forth to maintain expressions of their identity as individuals and as a distinctive group (Morgan & Pritchard 2004).

Tourism is one communicative vehicle (Hollinshead 2004) through which identity can be expressed, reified, and re-created. This research is interested in identity formation of international Indian students as members of the Indian diaspora, mitigated by cultural events, through the lens of tourism. This chapter broadly defines tourism, the types of tourism applicable to this research, the reasons why people engage in these events, and how these venues play a vital role in creating a sense of home abroad.

Tourism

Tourism, an often problematic term to define, refers to the world’s largest industry and creator of jobs in the world wide economy (World Travel and Tourism Council 2009). But what about the term and concept of tourism? For this research I chose to utilize John Urry’s (1990) definition of tourism in conjunction with Nelson Graburn’s
(1989) open-ended perspective, and Abram and Waldren’s (1997) option to fluidity through the process of defining, as I see the value in each separately and robustness when combined. Urry defines tourism as “a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organized work” (1990:2). Combine this denotation with Graburn’s (1989) disclaimer of any one definition of tourism as not being universally applicable but rather functional, symbolic, and best understood as a kind of ritual, which builds on Abram’s and Waldren’s (1997) discussion of the word tourism being one loosely associated with a phenomenon. In other words, tourism is a phenomenon in which the participant(s) are separated in some fashion from their ordinary lives for a period of time, and whether sought out or unintentionally transpires, is a major factor in bringing change (Wallace 2005) around the world, at home, and within one’s self.

In truth, no one definition is the perfect conceptual fit for tourism in its entirety. Nevertheless, working from a comparative framework (Burns 1999), breaking the phenomenon into smaller categories, likeness in constructs (type of separation, fashion or mode of separation, choice of extraordinary, and length of temporality) can be identified and more pointedly articulated under the umbrella of tourism. The following sections are attempts to outline for the reader the categories of tourism research applicable to this research to frame the focus of this paper.
Tourism Literature

As mentioned above, this introduction and broad overview of tourism forms is simply that, an introduction to and broad overview of reoccurring categories in the anthropology of tourism. This section is meant to demonstrate the more manageable defining processes when linking common variables, trends, and motivators, associated with this research; cultural tourism, heritage tourism, spiritual tourism, and diasporic tourism, recognizing a participant can embody and partake in multiple forms of tourism at any one time.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism research is people oriented versus the site specific. More pointedly, cultural tourism is focused on the “lifestyle[s] of… people, their history, and the artifacts and monuments they have made” (Boissevain 2004:254]. Needless to say, this category of tourism can be very broad and is frequently broken into more concentrated categories such as but not limited to spiritual tourism (Gmelch 2004), ethnic tourism (Smith 1989), historical tourism (Casteneda 2003), heritage tourism (McKercher & du Cros 2002), indigenous tourism (Hinch and Butler 2007), and diasporic tourism (Wood 1998, Coles & Timothy 2004). This paper is interested in the literature coming out of cultural tourism, with a focus on heritage tourism and diasporic tourism. Before
moving on to the tourist encounters and their respective motivations, I would like to delve a bit deeper into the subcategories of heritage tourism and diasporic tourism research.

*Heritage Tourism*

Heritage tourism, also referred to as cultural heritage tourism and historical tourism (Smith 1989, Bregalia 2006, Castaneda 2003), is when the intended attractions for tourists are legacy assets such as archeological sites, museums, ruins, festivals, folk performances, etc… (McKrecher & du Cros 2002). Some heritage tourism researchers identify heritage tourism as a strategic means of making sense of time and space (Castaneda 2003, Bregalia 2006). The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines tourism in the name of cultural heritage as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represents the stories and people of the past and present…[including] cultural, historic, and natural resources” (2009). Some of the largest and most visited destinations of cultural production are cultural heritage festivals (Chhabra, Healy & Sills 2003). The cultural events in this research align well with this rubric as the festivals of focus, are predominantly Pujas (worship) of different Hindu gods who symbolize various aspects of Indian culture or celebrations of Indian nationality.
“In terms of demand, heritage tourism is representative of many contemporary visitors’ desires to directly experience and consume diverse pasts and present cultural landscapes, performances, foods, handicrafts, and participatory activities” (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills 2003: 703). It is a phenomenon based on visitors’ motivations and perceptions rather than on specific site attributes (Poria et al. 2001) often based on nostalgia for the past and the desire to experience diverse cultural landscapes and forms (Zeppal & Hall 1991). Participants’ narratives reflect this desire to attend cultural events, explaining they wanted to experience a piece of home and shared their stories of how they used to celebrate various events, indicating a sense of longing for and nostalgia of home.

Heritage tourism as a venue is widely looked to as a tool for community economic development and is often promoted by the local government and private businesses (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills 2003). It is an economic activity, both in terms of financial capital and social capital, that makes use of socio-cultural assets to attract visitors (Fyall and Garrod 1998). Lew and Wang (2004) refer to tourism as the intercontinental tool for enhancing social capital created by open, collective and cooperative networks built on relationships of trust that ‘enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives’ (Putnam 1995:665). They see tourism as instrumental in bringing
people face to face with the potential of building mutually beneficial relationships particularly in diaspora tourism. This is illustrated when the Computer Science major answered students’ concerns of belonging neither here nor there with the response, “you participate”.

Outside of economic potential, researchers assert that heritage tourism and touristic places create spaces for ethnic pride (Hitchcock 1997). Robert Wood’s (1998) research takes this notion one step further, identifying an increase in parents relying on touristic places and events to teach ethnic identity and pride to their youth. Participants in this research shared a similar sentiment, explaining that at these events, they were proud to be Indian and these festivals that catered to differing sects of Hinduism, served as venues to learn other aspects of their larger identity as a whole. In sum, this particular research focuses on cultural festivals sponsored by community members producing cultural events from home, abroad, with an intent to evoke a national, religious and cultural sentiment, similar to spiritual tourism. Many members of this research shared their tales of national pilgrimages to Agra or the Golden Temple, as well as trips to Niagara Falls, explaining they must make such a trip as a national pilgrimage in the United States.
Spiritual Tourism

Spiritual tourism is rooted in the early pilgrimages (Gmelch 2004) in pursuit of spiritual renewal. Commonly spiritual, religious, and faith tourism is site situated; tourists setting forth to a physical location that is associated with a sacred meaning, value, or incident. These sites can range from a religious edifice to a location identified with natural or supernatural phenomena (vortexes, Cova da Iria and the sighting of Lady Fatima). However, this branch of tourism can also be identified with mission trips, religious conventions, faith-based camps and cruising, etc. Some researchers assert that domestic cultural heritage tourism constitutes a form of national pilgrimage…in the US visits to Philadelphia, Washington DC, Gettysburg, etc (Wood 1998).

In Ioannides and Ioannides (2004) research, they found that the modern pilgrimages are not necessarily religious based but rather acts of nostalgic devotion, often returning to sites of ancestors. They suggest that these journeys reflect what it is meant to be something in a more complete sense, beyond the confines of religion. Researchers focused on spiritual tourism, assert the motivation for these pilgrimages is to find self, ancestry, heritage, family and extended communities (Stephanson 2002, Duval 2003, King 1994). This type of tourism is reflected in diasporic tourism.
Diaspora Tourism

Diaspora tourism has often referred to touring the diaspora…. an exotic other to be gazed upon (Urry 1990). As discussed in Chapter 1, the term diaspora refers to people dispersed from their homeland and reassembled abroad, connected to one another based on perceived or real bonds of culture, typically defining themselves by their country of origin (Coles & Timothy 2004, Brubaker 2005, Cohen 1997, Safran 1991, Hall & Duvall 2004, Stephanson 2004). When looking to members of the diaspora in relationship to tourism, scattered populations of migrants or members of the diaspora were often typified in tourism research as subjects for ethnic tourism or travelers likely to partake in religious or secular pilgrimages or fulfilling socio-cultural rites of passage (Coles & Timothy 2004). Examples of this would be African Americans returning to their ancestral lands in Africa as a secular pilgrimage (Che 2004, Shepperson 1966) or as one participant in this research explained his desire to travel to Mecca as his religious and cultural rite of passage. In this context, diasporic tourism was seen as a potent force in shaping the linkages between the 1st and 3rd world (Nguyen & King 2004). However, there is a growing shift in focus where diaspora tourism is “tourism primarily produced, consumed, and experienced by diasporic communities” (2004:1 Coles & Timothy).
Diasporic tourism can be ancestral, domestic, international, etc (Nash 2000, Meethan 2002), but is often marked with aims to reaffirm and reinforce membership within a community (Coles & Timothy 2004). The aim to reaffirm and reinforce membership is an active reflection of Safran’s (1991) characteristics of a diaspora group maintaining a collective memory, vision, or myth as well as a demonstration of a group’s consciousness and solidarity. Unlike other forms of tourism, diasporic tourism is not necessarily an escape from the mundane, but instead serves as a platform, bridging the space between the lived experience and one’s homeland and ancestral ties (Leite 2005).

“It is [typically] characterized by an underlying seriousness of purpose and intentional engagement that sharply differentiates it from more common modes of leisure travel” (Leite 2005:228). Attending the various cultural events sponsored by the Indian Diaspora in Albany, New York, it appeared that these festivals were the physical and active manifestations of maintaining the collective myth and memory. These venues serve to educate and remind members of their religious roots, the culture of the homeland, and create a space of solidarity as expressed in the introduction of this chapter when students said, “I have learned more about my country as a whole by going to these festivals” and “…even if its not the part of India I am from, its home and I am a part”. These
elements of diasporic tourism are further illustrated in the cultural events in this research and highlighted by participants’ narratives in Chapters 4 and 5.

*Types of Diasporic Tourism*

Three major forms of diasporic tourism are discussed in the literature; return visits, visiting family and friends, and nostalgia. Return visits are typically journeys back to one’s ancestral land and are marked by a maintaining of social ties and desire to connect to one’s heritage and often a desire to temporarily not be the other (Stephanson 2004, Duval 2004). These visits can also come in what Tim Coles and Dallen Timothy (2004) call the “second variant, trips to visit co-members of the extended community beyond the homeland…. often taking the form of secular pilgrimages” (14). Hall and Duval (2004) look at diasporic tourism in relationship to return visits and ask if it is the diaspora that links the migrant to the external homeland or if it is the transnational nature of identities and social meanings that allows for such connections to manifest. Their research found that return visits in particular and diasporic tourism in general, where temporary sojourns made by members of diasporic communities to either the external homeland or gathering of diasporic members, in which strong social ties have been forged (Duvall 2004) or have the potential to reinforce, reiterate and solidify social and cultural identities. In this research, many of the participants had the opportunity to return
home, reinforcing their bonds of kinship as discussed in Chapter 5, but also created a sense of ambiguity of where they belong. This sense of being caught in between was expressed in the Introduction when the Computer Science major said, “you can never really go home again”. Ultimately, these types of visits are demonstrative for one to re-assert, re-affirm, and perform one’s heritage of identity (Esman 1984). Chapter 3 unpacks this identity formation further.

The second form of diasporic tourism is visiting family and friends (VFR). VFR is when a diasporic member’s relatives and associates from home or co-members visit and reunite with members of the diaspora to see how they live (Coles & Timothy 2004). This is when the primary motivation for diasporic travel movements is ethnic re-unions or family and friends coming to visit (King 1994). A few of the participants’ families and friends were able to visit during the course of this research, allowing for participants to reconnect with their loved ones, share their experiences abroad, and tour some of the United States. Their narratives, insights, and experiences regarding VFR, such as how every participant who did have family and friends come, traveled to Niagara Falls, are shared in greater detail in Chapter 5. VFR is yet another opportunity to reaffirm bonds of kinship between families, extended networks/communities and are often combined with trips to sites of personal heritage or familial meaning (Coles & Timothy 2004).
Finally there is nostalgia diasporic tourism, often synonymous with pilgrimage tourism (Ioannides & Ioannides 2004, Leite 2005). The homology between diasporic tourism and pilgrimages is often made explicit in the participants’ framing of the experience, both as a journey to a spiritual center and as an individual quest (Leite 2005, Cohen 1992). This framing by the participants was demonstrated through statements of

- “Finding one’s self”
- “Becoming a new version of me”
- “Seeing India through new eyes”

Tourism serves as a framework to connect these individuals through trade, circuits of interest, networks, kinships, etc, but on an even broader scale allows the stranger to virtually experience the nostalgic memory of home, abroad, while creating new memories (Coles & Timothy 2004). Nguyen and King (2004), found in their research, that nostalgic tourism serves as means for migrants and diasporic members to overcome feelings of separation or as outlined in diaspora studies, a sense of alienation in their new host community (Safran 1991, Cohen 1997), such as when participants referenced their accent or “being that Indian kid”.

Diasporic tourism as a whole, and more pointedly nostalgic tourism is often a pursuit of collective and personal memory with the diaspora tourist occupying the same space and time with other tourists (Coles & Timothy 2004). This particular research is
interested in the latter, when looking to international Indian students attending cultural heritage festivals sponsored by the Indian diasporic community. These events, what I later identify as Third Space events, are open to individuals outside of the diaspora but are predominately hosted and produced for the diasporic community themselves and international students comprising a subset of this community. The element of diasporic tourism is highlighted when one participant said, “going to events [in the U.S.] is like touring my own culture!”.

In Ioannides and Ioannides 2004 research of the Jewish Past as a Foreign Country, they looked at diasporic tourism spaces such as synagogues, graveyards, death camps, Jerusalem, etc. However these can be translated to other cultures, resulting in diasporic tourism spaces being identified as neighborhoods, countries, homes of famous members among the diasporic culture, religious institutions, historical locations, and museums. In this project, these festivals are predominately housed in the Mandirs (Hindu religious institutions) or academic spaces such at the University at Albany performing arts center and athletic fields. These spaces, further addressed in Chapter 4, are decorated and transformed to evoke a sense of home abroad. “Humankind is now faced with a situation where one’s own life is no longer tied to a particular place” (Beck 2000:74) and perhaps as Giddens (1990) argues, social relations have become disembodied across space and
time (Meethan 2004). “By definition, diasporas exist scattered across space, tourism consumes space and place and the mutually re-enforcing relationships between diaspora and tourism play out in highly particularized spaces” (Coles and Timothy 2004:17).

Understanding tourism as a phenomenon as a space of leisure, and in the contexts of diaspora tourism as a space of leisure with an underlining seriousness and intention, creates an opportunity for this research to more fully understand the various cultural festivals of focus. This project focuses on cultural events both produced and consumed by members of the diaspora as Coles and Timothy (2004) suggest and is interested in understanding these events as spaces in which the collective memory (Saffron 1991, Cohen 1997) and nostalgia are performed (Coles & Timothy 2004, Nguyen & King 2004). Participants narratives of how they related to these events such as statements of “this is our Christmas” when discussing Diwali or “being here, I get to taste India...even if its not the part of India I am from, its home and I am a part”, and their descriptions of the meanings of these events, shed light into how these venues create a sense of home abroad as illustrated in Chapter 4 and further analyzed in Chapter 5. Since I am ultimately interested in cultural tourism as demonstrated through heritage and diasporic tourism as a lens through which to understand the Third Spaces in this research as spaces of being and becoming, I attempt to frame my connections and examples
appropriately and look to the encounters under the tourism umbrella and that which motivates the interactions.

**Motivations**

Why do people engage in this phenomenon we have labeled tourism? As stated earlier, one portion of the operational definition of tourism is that which is not work (Urry 1990), meaning tourism as a phenomena serves as one form of temporary relief from the mundane nature of work. However it serves as more than relief, which as Graburn (1989, 2004) discusses, relief could come in the form of simply not actively engaging in or attending work. He suggests that there is a degree of pro-activity accompanied by travel when viewing tourism as a reprieve. Participants demonstrated a similar sense when they explained simply being somewhere they could speak Hindi was a break from school and English. So more pointedly, tourism serves as a means of relaxation from the tensions of daily life, taking one away from it all, and offers an opportunity of renewal (Nash 1989).

Incorporating a structuralist approach and building on the above-mentioned desire for rejuvenation, Graburn (1989, 2004) juxtaposes the tourism/work opposition to Durkheim’s sacred/profane dichotomy. He illustrates the pairing of the profane with work and the sacred with tourism as markers of transition similar to those used when looking at
sacrifice rituals and the process of moving from the ordinary. He notes these
phenomenological transitions important stating “…sacrilization…elevates participants to
the non-ordinary state wherein marvelous things happen…” (Graburn 1989:25). It is here
that he identifies the “magic” of tourism, in these moments meaning is found, which
serve as important symbolic markers of time and fulfill an absence in one’s ordinary life.
This absence is expressed as participants shared the feeling of not belonging. They fulfill
this absence by attending these events where magic is demonstrated through statements
of being apart. In other words, there is a desire to remove oneself from their localized
life, to achieve and maintain a degree of stimulation (Graburn 1989) and is often sought
through “artificial sources of stimulation…in order to make up for the shortcoming of
[one’s] own environment” (Berlyne 1968:170, cited in Graburn 1989:24). In this
research, the ‘shortcomings’ are contextualized in the separation from home abroad as
was articulated in the Introduction when members expressed a longing to return to India
for Diwali and the re-creation of the family mealtime in India with friends. Another
shortcoming is what Cohen (1992) identifies as the perceived sense of alienation or lack
of acceptance as was illustrated by the awareness of the Indian accent and fears of
ridicule regarding diet, smells, and religious practices.
The desires or motivators to engage in tourism are “felt needs” (Graburn 2004), needs that represent the tourist’s desires, expectations and hopes. Graburn, keeping with the sacred and profane, likens these needs to a spiritual quest in which the tourist is seeking enlightenment. Informing these felt needs are the tourists’ backgrounds, values, and interests (MacCannell 1999, Graburn 2004), which can be typologically specific. For example, MacCannell argues that the leisure class or the moderns are seeking authenticity, to experience the real through the perceived “naturalness” of the primitive other. In this example it is the leisure class searching for a fulfillment of a seeming absence, a shortcoming, and it is this attainment that equates to the achieved enlightenment.

A portion of the anthropological research focused on the notion of felt needs and tourism, explores the influence of tourists’ backgrounds, expectations, and desires that articulate and drive their motivations for these touristic engagements (MacCannell 1999, Graburn 1989, Tucker 1997, Nuttall 1997). In terms of Cultural Heritage tourism, the felt needs are often expressed by the desire to see how the ‘other half’ lives (Graburn 1989), the wish to know the ‘other’ (Loeb 1989). However, in the vein in which this research is focused on diasporic tourism, the felt needs would be more based on self and group identity, reaffirming of cultural bonds, and a pursuit of a sense of home abroad. Nostalgia
can be a motivator for individuals to travel to heritage sites and festivals (Timothy & Teye 2004, Timothy & Boyd 2003). Similarly, I argue that the felt needs in this research are desires or nostalgic motivations on the part of the international Indian students to experience a piece of home through music, religion, language, and food.

Returning to MacCannell’s example of the leisure class and Cultural Heritage tourism, he suggests that the perceived absence is of a “simpler” life, a life rooted in the natural and authentic. Through Indigenous tourism the modern is thought to encounter the primitive (MacCannell 1999), the living past, and liminally on some level experience the ‘other’s’ simpler world. But for diasporic tourism, dependent of type, there is a desire to connect and maintain ethnic/cultural bonds and identities tied to the ancestral home (Coles and Timothy 2004, Stephanson 2004, Duval 2004). These desires are expressed in their narratives in Chapter 4, highlighting a longing to be apart, a need to belong.

Much of the research focused on tourist motivation as felt needs, demonstrates that expectations on the part of the tourists are cultivated with the aid of outside sources such as the advertisements, agents, guidebooks, signs, cultural brokers, etc which are suggested to possess the power of influence and persuasion (Cheong & Miller 2004). As noted, when referencing tourism in relationship to the imagery and messages that are issued within this domain, there are multiple third party stimuli such as advertisements
that depict suntans, souvenirs, and snapshots (Rojek & Urry 1997). They utilize terms such as thrilling, exotic, glamorous, tribal, ethnic, and remote to captivate the potential tourists and their desires (Moeram 2004).

There are also the means of message transmission through informational literature such as guidebooks and travel narratives where the experienced report to the novice, both overtly and inadvertently advising the future traveler. They incorporate phrases such as, “museum of peoples” and “colorful people” (Abbink 2004:269) descriptions of bamboo huts, gold nose rings, and local chiefs (Smith 1989), and political statements such as the ability to sustain as “sociological holdouts” (Smith 1989). These messages all tap into and create expectations, desires, and hopes, influencing, motivating, and potentially satisfying a felt need. However, I ask in this research, what are the expectations, desires, and hopes when the tourists are members of the over-arching culture in which the touristic event is situated? In Stylianou’s and Lambert’s (2011) research, they conclude that one might argue that tourists true spiritual center is in themselves and cultural tourism is not only the desire to discover the other but also satisfies the self” (408). Using these theoretical frameworks of motivations and felt needs in engaging, participating, and producing touristic venues, this research is be able to understand why the participants seek out these cultural festivals and how they create a space of hybridized sense of self.
Socio-Cultural Encounters

Sharon Gmelch (2004) points out that tourism as a serious focus of study was made of particular interest to social scientists in the way tourism “brings consumers [guests] and producers [hosts] into intimate contact with each other” (8). Abrams and Waldren, and Macleod (1997) suggest that tourism encounters are constituted and typified by the dynamic interchange from which various meanings are produced. These touristic transactions are characterized by strangerhood (Nash 1989, Burns 1999, Simmel 1950, Cohen 1972), or representatives from various communities and cultures that engage in intercultural communication and interaction in the realm of unfamiliarity. The ethnographic description of the Sarswati Puja identifies this strangerhood and intercultural unfamiliarity as the Indian students, both Bengali and non, although a part of the overarching diasporic community are separated from their family and friends and felt outside of their realm of comfort.

Researchers, such as Nash (2000), suggest that people do not stray too far from how they interact with their everyday life practices from how they engage with tourism, identifying this concept as his spillover hypothesis. Kim, Cheong & O’Leary (2007) further expound on this concept and Cohen’s (1979) assertion that notions of home and away are most often inseparable, stating “individuals experiences in everyday life carry
over into the tourism arena which results in a similar pattern of everyday cultural practice and tourism cultural practice” (1370). The Third Spaces in this research are examples of the spillover hypothesis (Kim, Cheong & O’Leary 2007) and Cohen’s (1979) similar patterns of everyday culture in tourism, as these festivals are also practiced back in India. The difference is, just as the Indian diaspora is dispersed and reassembled, so are these events, impacted by environmental constraints and re-interpretations, but ultimately creating a sense of home abroad for the participants.

Theses socio-cultural touristic encounters are primarily broken into two parts; the tourists and the locals. Similar to the explication of tourism, anthropological researchers of tourism attempt to offer labels by which a conversation in the literature of tourism studies could reference the participants with ease. What has come from such academic dialogue and suppositions are the offerings of ‘host’ and ‘guest’ (Smith 1989), tourists and non-tourists or the toured (Abram, Waldren & Macleod 1997), visitors and locals (MacDonald 1997, Waldren 1997), the ‘us’ and ‘we’ (Evan-Pritchard 1989, Kohn 1997, Laxon 1991) and the ‘them’ and the ‘other’ (Laxon 1991, Waldren 1997, Kohn 1997, Chambers 2000, Palmer 2005). In line with the assertion made earlier, it seems that the appropriate terminology will grow from the circumstance and lens through which we engage with the situation and ”community” of interest. Each of the above listed terms
comes from a point of theoretical, positional, and political conjecture. The overarching theme is the dichotomy of one to the other, the insider and outsider. It is through the deconstruction of what is not the ‘us’ that the ‘we’ and the other is created (Abram & Waldren 1997).

For this paper the ‘not us’ and the ‘we’ are not so easily separated. The hosts are members of the Indian diasporic community, which, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, also houses the international Indian student population, yet the international Indian students are also the guests. I delineate their difference as the hosts being those members who are individuals born here or have been members of the community for a lengthy period of time where the international students are individuals who have arrived recently (0-5 yrs). As Erve Chambers points out “the distinction between guest and host has become blurred…tourists are increasingly the guests of their own airlines, their own hotel chains and resort complexes, buying their own goods…” (1997:4). This ambiguity of positions of the touristic encounter raises the need of awareness for the categorizing agent (Macleod 1997). Deirdre Evans-Pritchard (1989) posits that the delineation of them and us demonstrates the notion of exclusion as a means of inclusion with the hosts being those who posses the local knowledge. This research stretches the traditional approach of
guests and hosts, further building upon Macleod’s ambiguous categorizing agent (1997) and Chambers assertion of the ever-blurring line (1997).

Levels

The touristic interaction occurs on a variety of levels: the mass, the group, and the interpersonal. This is similar to Fredline and Faulkner’s (2000) discussion of the three interaction groups: media, social, and direct interaction. Tourism for the masses, identified as the category of media by Fredline & Faulkner, is also known as impersonal tourism. Mass or impersonal tourism research explores the representation of the tourist and toured in advertisements (Taylor 2000), promotional boards (Hitchcock 1999) travel websites, brochures (Crang 1997), as well as guidebooks, newspapers, television programs, and magazines (Jaworski et al. 2003). Palmer (1999) asserts that these images are resources “by which local people can be identified and encountered” (p. 318). In this research, the majority of events constitute a touristic venue for the masses, serving anywhere between 200 and 800 people. The Spring Festival is the extreme example of mass tourism in this research, catering to more than 2,000 attendees at any one time.

The interpersonal or direct interaction level is comprised of the host and guest engaging in one-on-one dialogue. This direct contact (Fredline & Faulkner 2000) of the host and the guests involved is an interaction of intention and typically instrumental in
nature such as information seeking (Nunez 1989). The social or group level used in this model refers to touristic encounters that are smaller than the masses but larger than the interpersonal, such as a group of performers in contact with a tourist group (Bruner 2004). This would be reflected in the cricket games and between performers, volunteers, and other international Indian students from different academic institutions. The opportunity exists in-group interaction for an interpersonal engagement but there is a social distance between groups. This social distance is reflective of the strangerhood or intercultural communication unfamiliarity as addressed above. Researchers also touch on inter-group relations and interactions, a phenomenological process of group identity negotiation and information projection (Little 2004, Abram, Waldren & Macleod 1997, and Desforges 2001). Chapter 3, focused on identity formation, delves deeper into the inter-group relationship dynamics.

The arena in which the hosts and guests come into contact with one another has been identified by a variety of terms ranging from stage (Goffman 1959), structural division (MacCannell 1999), empty meeting grounds (MacCannell 1992), space of colonial encounters (Pratt 1992), third space (Bhabha 1994), and borderzone (Bruner 2004). Goffman analyzed the social and physical space of social encounters through the division of the front and back regions. MacCannell identifies the front as the space of
host and guest connection, service, and performance, the place of the empty meeting grounds (1992); the back is the place of preparation and relaxation. MacCannell offers the examples of the reception desk and parlor for the front and boiler rooms, kitchens, and executive washrooms for the back region. MacCannell further breaks the space into six regions; one embodying Goffman’s front and five the back, offering a continuum of entry and immersion.

Similar to the space of empty meeting grounds, Bruner (2005) identifies the “borderzone [as] a point of conjecture, a behavioral field, a spatial term, usually a distant meeting place between tourists and local performers” (17). He sees these borderzones as unnatural interfaces, influenced by the global and international developments in the tourism industry as well as the negotiation of the nation-state identity (Friedman 2003). Although referred to as the empty meeting grounds (MacCannell 1992) this is a site not devoid of analytical value but rather, are transitional sectors or sites of struggle (Bruner 2004) where culture can be performed, contested, and invented through interactions (Chapter 3). These interactions often begin with a “gaze”.

John Urry’s tourist gaze (1990) is a concept addressing the act of looking upon a community, landscape, activity and so forth that are atypical to the viewers mundane. The tourist’s “gaze is constructed through signs” (1990:3) and is often informed and
influenced by the design of postcards, films, and advertisements. Chris Rojek and John Urry (1997) claim that the tourist gaze depends on social discourses. These discourses can be in the form of, but are not limited to, seeing the sights, literature authored by travel writers (media or mass interaction), dialogue with cultural brokers (social or group interaction), and the performances of the other (Rojek & Urry 1997). It is the interactional discourse that Bruner (2004) refers to as improvisational and takes place on the stage of the borderzone where the visitors and the visited are the actors.

For this research, the intention is to concentrate on the relationships between the diasporic condition and the production and consumption of tourism for members of the diaspora themselves, rather than diasporic members as exotic others to be gazed upon (Coles & Timothy 2004). More pointedly, this project looks to international Indian students as they related to these various cultural events sponsored by the extended Indian community. As addressed earlier, there is a sense of diasporic group solidarity where the students are not an exotic other, nor are the sponsoring agents, but instead they are differentiated by membership. In other words, the participants in this research are the sometimes insiders and sometimes outsiders (Hollinshead 2004) interacting in the half-realm or rather Third Space (Bhabha 1994), discussed in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4.
In turn the question is how these events and intergroup interactions impact international Indian students’ sense of self and being a part of a collective abroad.

**Impact**

Understanding what tourism is, why people engage in tourist encounters, the players involved and the levels at which there is interaction, provide a backdrop in understanding the ways in which these touristic encounters have been studied.

Theoretically, these interactions have been examined in multiple disciplines through the lenses of social exchange theory (Gursoy & Rutherford 2004), costs and rewards (Stebbins 1996; as discussed in Economics), social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor 1973; as discussed in Economics) relational dialectics (Baxter, Little 2004; Identity), communication accommodation theory (Cargile & Giles 1996; as discussed in Identity) power and Foucault (Mills 2003; as discussed in Power) and structuralism with a Durkheimian ritualistic frame (MacCannell, Graburn 1989, 2004; as discussed in Motivations).

Impact studies often look to variables such as the types of tourists, number of tourists, length of stay/season, and the role of the third party (Burns 1999, Cohen 1972, Nash 1977, 1981, Smith 1989, Urry 1990). Within the host group, tourism can bring about a variety of negative relational issues and higher levels of stress (Smith 1989).
“Social and family values are challenged, new economically powerful groups [emerge], and cultural practices [are] adapted to suit the needs of the tourists” (Brunt & Courtney 1999:495).

Many studies have focused on impacts of tourism encounters, looking to the length of stay, amount of direct contact the guest and host have, and incidence of return as what I assert are indicators of the extent of influence and bearing the participants may have on one another, paralleling social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor 1973); where the breadth, depth, and frequency of interaction correlate with degree of self disclosure. Researchers identify face-to-face interactions as having the greatest impact (Smith 1989, Graburn 1989, Macleod 1997) with observational tours being less intrusive (Urry 1990) consistent with the levels of interactions addressed above. The charge of these interactions, either positively or negatively, are the valence with positive socio-cultural connections resulting in friendships, romantic relationships, exchange of ideas, tradition revitalization (Nuttall 1997) and formulations of one’s personhood, and the way we think about the world (Chambers 2000). The charges, positively or negatively, can be framed in terms of economics.
Economy

John Urry (1990) identifies tourism as a signifier of broad economic, social, and cultural changes. The tourism industry, based in economics (Vellas & Becherel 1995), is guest centered (Chambers 1997) resulting in a market bias. Tourism represents the most productive sector of the industrial market accounting for 12% for the world’s GNP (Vellas & Becherel 1995). During the late 1960’s, the U.S. government and financial foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, began investing money to build up tourism initiatives on the indigenous reservations through the development of museums, campgrounds, motels, and arts and crafts centers (Martin 1998). With these ventures, which can be problematic, employment opportunities are created within the tourism infrastructure (Jamison 1999) as are diversity in consumer options, and positions or political power (Vella & Becherel 1995). From these developments, community decision frequently begins to be made based on economics and no longer on utility, often in the form of a group choosing to sell commodifications of themselves (Nash 1989). Greenwood (1989) views this commodification of peoples as moving implicit cultural meanings to the explicit for the outsider. As a result MacCannell (1984) asserts that a community is seen to no longer evolve naturally, instead responding to outsiders wants and demands. Communities that were once agriculturally focused begin to depend on the
The capitalistic market of tourism (Macleod 1997) creates greater demands, increased travel and food prices (Whittaker 1997), overcrowding, irreversible environmental damage (landscarring, littering, graffiti (Turco & Riley 1998)), and conflicts over resources (Brohman 1996).

MacCannell (1992) notes the importance of the market and market values, but fears that it subsumes all, rendering all else as invaluable (MacDonald 1997). Stebbins (1996) uses the idea of cost and rewards as typical of the economic perspective when looking at tourism impacts, but also examines differences between hosts and guests in these gains and losses. He concludes that a reward for the host is the “special identity”, but is costed by confusion and social awkwardness in their own space.

In relationship to the tourist, Stebbins suggests the rewards of gaining a sense of self-actualization and an enhancement of their own self-image with no loss. As for the host, there are costs such as the disruption of cultural traditions (Lew &van Otten 1998) negatively perceived enculturation (Hitchcock1997) and ethno cultural self-consciousness (Rodriguez 2003), but the rewards are demonstrated through reification of community and culture as well as revival of ancient traditions (Vella & Becherel 1995, Little 2004, Castaneda 2003, Martin 1998). Similarly, social exchange theory, which is ultimately interest in the costs and benefits parties experience and perceive, is influenced...
by variables of both direct and indirect communication, which continually shapes our perceptions. Gursoy and Rutherford demonstrate the applicability of social exchange theory as they try to understand the factors influencing reactions towards the tourism industry and more specifically the economic, social, and cultural impacts.

Turco and Riley (1998) incorporate the notion of costs and benefits, focusing on Native American communities engaged in the tourism industry, noting a group identified sense of an improved quality of life through increased services that come with tourism development, amplified police force, potential for a greater understanding of non-native cultures and a heightened opportunity for cultural exchange. In this research, I ask if through these cultural events, there is a sense of improved quality of life. Do these touristic venues create a space of value for international Indian students and if so, what are the benefits?

Conclusion

In tourism studies when we address the role of globalization we must acknowledge that it “has stimulated new forms of travel, tourism, and migration whose production and consumption are intricately bound together” (Coles & Dallen 2004:3). Coles and Dallen (2004) identified diasporic communities as a key type of community that has been overlooked in tourism studies. They suggest that the research that does look
to such communities either focuses on their role as low cost unskilled labor (Eade 2000, Williams & Hall 2000) or as cultural capital for imagery and marketing (Van Hear 1998, Klemm 2002). Timothy and Coles (2004) proclaim that diasporas are a major global constituency active in the production and consumption of tourism stating that “we need to understand far more about the involvement of diasporas in tourism production for both diaspora members and non members (295). Overall there is a need for tourism research to more fully engage with diasporic studies (Hollinshead 2004) as tourism serves as a “discrete social practice in enabling transnational social networks to function through tourism; through bringing diaspora members together, cements the social relevance of the extended community for individuals members while renewing, reiterating, and reinforcing cultural norms and values” (Duval 2004:17). This research is an attempt to answer such a call. Looking to these cultural events produced, consumed, and experienced by the participants, members of the Indian diaspora, the importance of the broader diasporic community is highlighted and identity formation is explored.

It attempts to meet the tourists’ needs, tourist driven products are sold (Medina 2003), staged authenticity and picture opportunities are provided, and tourist spaces are organized (Urry 1990). Looking at the pursuit of authenticity, formation of identity, power dynamics involved, and the focus on tourism impact we are able to look at the
major categories that demand attention. “Tourism will not only regularly re-make and de-
make old diasporas…it will quite frequently be one of, or the principal communicative
vehicle by which all sorts of new diasporas and neoliberal groups seek to revel and
legitimize themselves” (Hollinshead 2004:46), and in turn the self.
Chapter 3: Identity

“The practice of tourism reflects, shapes, manipulates, and transforms culture and identity in complex and multiple ways” Rodriguez 2003

4 o’clock on a Sunday in November, the campus podium is filled with people dressed in an array of kurtis, kurtas, lenghas, saris, salwar kameezes, and pathani suits adorned with bindis, tikkas, bangles, and dupattas. Performers in costumes navigate the crowd, welcoming family and friends and linking up with their group members. Faculty, administrators, and staff greet one another, are introduced to students’ loved ones, and make mention of the decorations that have transformed the otherwise sanitized academic space. Volunteers assist guests to their seats, make last minute backstage runs, and sell raffle tickets. Backstage, performers put their final touches on their costumes, mentally walk through their performances, and excitedly chatter with one another about how many people are in the audience, and wishing one another luck. The house lights dim.

From the audience, all that is visible are the battery-powered diyas (similar to a votive candle), the strung lights, and spotlight placed on the small statue of Laxmi (goddess of wealth honored during Diwali). Spontaneous cheers erupt from the crowd often initiated by a call of a performer’s name and friends and family cheering in support.
Indians discuss with one another stories of how they celebrate Diwali back at home or ask if they attended other Diwali celebrations in the area. New comers ask questions such as what is Diwali, do they [Indians] miss home, etc. University representatives are ushered to the front rows marked VIP seating along side board members of other Indian diasporic organizations and quietly wait for the show to begin.

The executive board welcomes everyone, which is immediately responded with an uproar of cheers from the crowd. The hosts walk the audience through a brief introduction of the meaning of Diwali and what their organization does but quickly exit the stage, letting the performances commence. Throughout the show, audience members clap to the beat of songs, sing along to songs they know, and excitedly applaud their favorite performers. During the show you can hear conversations about the dances and songs, if the performers had performed in the past and if they had improved or not, or what aspects of the show was their favorite. Comparisons were made about costuming, skill, blends of Eastern and Western cultural elements, what was missing, and what was new. By the end of the show the audience was on their feet clapping, cheering, and dancing in their seats, ready for the after party.

After the performances, I sat with participants and asked their opinions on the event. Everyone said they wish there had been fireworks (addressed in more depth in
Chapter 4) but how good it felt to be in a room with so many people celebrating Diwali, even if it was not the same as back home. There was a discussion about festivals here in the United States versus those back home, and the different ways of presenting India and themselves. Participants said…

- “I love seeing how people here celebrate these pujas differently….its interesting and exciting to me.”
- “There is so much missing here! I wish you could come to India and see how it is really done…but then again there are new fun things done here too!”
- “Being at an event that celebrates Indian culture around so many non Indians, getting to wear my clothes, hear our music, see our flag, it makes me proud to be Indian, its like a new India…its who I am!”

These statements highlight the sense of nostalgia for home, the differences between here and there, collective ethnic pride, and ultimately a sense of ‘tribe’ and ‘self’ identity taking on a new form through participation in these touristic Third Spaces.

Identity is a topic of focus among tourism scholars in general and a focus of diasporic tourism in particular, through the assessment of authenticity (Che 2004), pseudo events (Boorstin 1961), and staged authenticity (MacCannell 1976). Heritage tourism studies often focus on authenticity as a factor (Fisher 1999) in predicting the perceived quality of a cultural event (Cohen 1998). Authenticity is staged and distorted to meet the needs of both hosts and guests (Van den Berghe 1984, MacCannell 1976, Brunner 1991). Che notes that tourism events produced by diasporic cultures are
constantly re-negotiated and re-made as both the diasporic and the host cultures change. Che goes on to say “authenticity is realized as tourists attain personal insights and associations through their experience of places” (2004:262). Eric Cohen’s (1998) understanding and interpretation of the authentic allows for change in defining cultural authenticity, as it is emergent and in turn negotiable and ultimately reflected in both the individual and the collective group identity formation.

**Authenticity**

“By focusing on the negotiation of identity, the symbolic aspects of tourism rituals can be understood in relation to the discourses of authenticity…the observers of tourism” (Macleod 1997:9). This concept of authenticity is socially constructed and relative to the interactions between participants, that are determined in part by the background knowledge and individuals’ frame of reference (Teague 1997, McKercher & du Cros 2003). In this research participants are members of the same overarching culture from which these events are derived but are performed outside their space of origin.

Tourism studies have demonstrated the importance of distinguishing setting versus people when deciphering the authentic or real (Pearce & Moscardo 1985). MacCannell (1992) identifies stages as progressing towards the authentic, the back stage, and the space of working life. Cohen (1972, 1979) looks at the experiential tourist interested in
the ‘others’ real life, the working life (in opposition to the tourist) and the desire to ‘break
bread’ with the indigenous host (Nuttall 1997, Smith 1989). However, in this project, the
other is a part of the same collective as the self.

These studies have examined the opacity of this concept when looking at when
the real becomes what is seen as a staged authenticity (MacCannell 1992), questioning if
a person is of or in a place (Waldren 1997), and the production of commodities
(Greenwood 2004). The production of these commodities can serve as an opportunity to
connect with the authentic other in a somewhat sanitized assemblage such as an open-air
market or intertribal gathering. The ability to purchase said commodifications of culture
is a venue by which a tourist can purchase “Indian handmade” objects (Sweet 1985) or as
Dilworth (2003) discusses, a Kachina doll that was once owned by a real Hopi Indian,
intensifying its authenticity. Stewart (1993) identifies the purchases of cultural
commodifications as traces of the authentic. However this research is not focused on
authenticity in relationship to goods produced for sale, but rather experiences and
representations by the diasporic members, and when the staged becomes the authentic.

*Imagery*

The term authenticity also appears in the literature in relation to the images and
examined how this “image-work” helped sustain or develop new authenticities, suggesting that eventually a “tourist nation” emerges from this medium. One major critique of the relationship of tourism, imagery, and authenticity and the position of power is expressed by Donald Macleod (1997) when he states “tourism is tainted with the imagery of totalizing modernity that tarnishes all it touches, destroying authentic cultures and polluting earthly paradises; so that it has become a truism to state that tourism destroys the very object of desire” (1). However, this research shows how tourism builds and solidifies the collective and creates a new self in the diaspora.

Although these images may not be reflective of how these hosts view themselves nor their lived reality, these images are utilized to entice, allure, and draw (Palmer 2005) on the felt needs of the tourist as discussed in chapter 2. In pursuit of the remarkable or the sacred and with expectations built from images of a performed other, a sometimes constructed authenticity is built from a reification of stereotypes (Martin 1998) so that there are critical assessments on the part of the tourists and pressures on the host to conform to these expectations (Urry 1990). Researchers note the expressed desire or felt need to see and understand how the other truly lives (Laxon 1991) but the tourists’ authenticity is not always a reality (McKreacher & du Cros 2002), except when it is. This research focuses on a different group interaction dynamic as these events are
produced and consumed primarily by the diasporic community themselves. In other words, while some of the events in this research aim to attract non-group members, the focus is on members of the same over-arching community. The participants in this research discuss the various components of these festivals that are missing, what makes them different from home; yet identify new symbols that create the new real experiences.

*Experiences*

Authenticity will be different for different people, gender, birth origin, time spent in origin of home, socioeconomic differences, as well as differences between those who have experienced the “real” culture versus those who have not (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills 2003, Lei 2007). An authentic diasporic experience involves participation in a collective ritual, where strangers get together in a cultural production to share a feeling of closeness or solidarity (Fine & Speer 1997), much like the description of the Saraswati Puja in Chapter 2, followed by statements of being a part of the collective effort in producing the Indian Student Organization’s Diwali. This is not necessarily a re-creation of the past but rather a collective effort that draws from a collective memory of the past; nostalgia (Coles & Timothy 2004). Participants discussed putting on the Indian Student Organization’s Diwali and explained that while they celebrate Diwali back home mostly the same, there were minor differences from state to state, sect to sect, and family to
family. The ISO’s Diwali was an opportunity to make Diwali represent all of the different students and their backgrounds. As discussed in chapter 2, this nostalgia can be a motivator for individuals to attend heritage sites and festivals, satisfying a felt need of reaffirming cultural bonds or pursuit of a sense of home abroad (Coles & Timothy 2004).

What was once contrived is now authentic (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills 2003). High perceptions of authenticity can be achieved even when an event is held in a place far away from the original source of a cultural tradition and is not correlated with personal connection to land of origin, but rather the presentation (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills 2003). McIntosh & Prentice (1999) refer to ‘insightfulness’…where a group achieves insight as they assimilate the information presented in the attraction, filtered through their values and past experiences. The cultural events of focus in this project are reflective of the contrived authentic. These events are celebrated thousands of miles away, sometimes in venues such as Mandirs, sometimes in large public theatres, and others in public school gymnasiums, all redecorated and reassembled to create a space to experience the authentic sense of home abroad. From these experiences statements such as

- “I have learned more about my country as a whole by going to these festivals”
- “Being at an event that celebrates Indian culture around so many non Indians…makes me proud to be Indian, its like a new India…its who I am”
illustrate group and self-insight. Authenticity of experiences is relative to the individual, their construction of what current diasporic identity is and in turn what should or should not be relevant. Similarly it is relative to the unfolding of the diasporic group identity as it emerges and is presented to others. It is this emergent authenticity, which allows for change in defining cultural authenticity and identity (Cohen 1988).

**Presentation of Identity**

Linking the past, present, locality, and identity under the rubric of tourism and diasporas, can be demonstrated through performance. Research looks to both formal performances, such as ceremonial or emblematic dances, plays, concerts, etc, as well as the moment of tourist encounter where the host performs self and group identity for the guest, and vice versa (Macleod 1997). The latter engagements often dictate the success of the encounter and probability of tourist return (Lew 1998), while shedding light on the host’s perception of the guest. These staged performances are similar to Urry’s (1990) gaze and Bhaktin’s (1986) speech genres when the participants are actively choosing their words and to whom they speak, how they behave, and manner in which they respond.

The staged performance studies similarly look to selection of performed identity, but of clothing, music, dances, etc and their connection to the communities’ history and
folklore (Abram 1997). This is demonstrated through the wearing of lenghas and kurtis, the incorporation of the religious deities, and the stories hosts share. These investigations shed light on how the self and other desires to be seen as well as what is thought to be desired (Little 2002, Medina 2006). Building on the communities’ ties to their history and folklore, some anthropologists have looked to the meaningfulness of a performance and the changes that may or may not have occurred over time (Bruner 2004), and their degree of authenticity. Similarly this research is interested in the communities’ presentations of the collective self and their ties to their history and folklore and in turn their identity formation. In Chapters 4 and 5, the differences between how these events are celebrated in India versus here, are addressed, as is the reassemblage of symbols to satisfy a need to feel the real, impacting their identity.

Identity

A variety of research has examined the impact of tourism on the identity of both the tourists (Giddens 1991, Munt 1994, Hall 1996, Desforges 2000, Palmer 2005) and the toured (Greenwood 1989, Urry 1994, 1995, Palmer 1999, Little 2004). Palmer (2005) states “tourism is one of the defining activities of the modern world, shaping the ways in which one relates to and understands self and other, nation and nation-ness” (8), through the expression of exclusion and inclusion (Abrams & Waldren 1997). It allows the tourist
to travel the world, determining their place in it and to host a new sense of self, developed through touristic encounters (MacCannell 1999). O’Connor (1993) argues that the “individual and personal identities are constructed through interaction with others and determined largely by the ways in which we are perceived and treated” (O’Connor’s study as cited in Palmer 1999). In other words it is through interactions that individuals negotiate who they are, their identity (Little 2004).

Smith (1989) sees identity as an emergent process in which tourism serves as a catalyst, creating cultural and political pressures and conflict (MacCannell 1992). Similarly, Little (2004) looks to the role of power relations and indigeniety in the context of tourism, identifying touristic encounters as a venue for identity reproduction (Tax 1941) in response to cultural differences (Appadurai 1996, Bhabha 1994). These cultural reproducing self-actualizations serve to revalue traditional concepts of community and individual identity (Medina 2003, Little 2004), sometimes leading to a reincorporation of dormant traditions (Lew & van Otten 1998) such as ceremonies (Sweet 2004) and handicrafts (Little 2004), or in the case of this research, participating in ‘Indian’ events they would not have back in India. Heritage sites in specific are useful centers in which to explore questions of identity and look to these performances of culture for tourism (Castaneda 1996, MacDonald 1997) through interplay between history and self in the
modern political and economic framework. This is demonstrated in the case of The Battle of Little Bighorn re-enactment where Sioux group identity, contextualized in history, is emphasized to the onlookers (Buchholtz 1998). In this project, performances demonstrated that such interplay would be the Indian Republic Day festival and various pujas that are both religiously and historically rooted and also help shape behaviors today.

*Group Identity*

Other researchers have focused their attention on this collective identity, suggesting it is grouped through the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomies (as discussed in Chapter 2). The studies have looked to the host and guest reflections and perceptions of the encounters (Evans-Pritchard 1989, Laxon 1991, Kahn 2006) and how they see themselves as reflected (Medina 2003, Little 2000). Medina (2002) and Little (2004) assert that positive interaction and identification of similarities can result and emerge, creating a desire to reinvest in the community and mission. This is reflected in attending Mandirs and pujas that they would not have back at home such as a Gujarati attending a Sikh Temple or a Punjabi attending a Bengali puja. However it is the desire to reinvest in the community or friends and find the similarities that lead to the collective Indian identity. In relation to cultural heritage tourism, Palmer (1999) states “cultural identity
underpins national identity as it communicates the past and present traditions and mores of people, thus enabling them to be identified as a distinctive group” (316). Fredline and Faulkner’s (2000) research demonstrates that participants are in part guided by what information is selected to be shared, influencing identities and informing the presentation of self (Goffman 1959).

Tourism and Ethnic Identity

Domestic ethnic tourism provides a venue to look to ethnic relations and in turn provides a way of identifying processes of both the reproduction and restructuring of ethnic relations (Wood 1998) as shown in [Box 3.1]. For diasporas, cultural tourism promotes cultural traditions of a diasporic group in its new homeland as well as a sense of pride within and among the community (Che 2004:261). This is reflected with the statement of, “it makes me proud to be Indian, its like a new India…its who I am”

<table>
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<th>Box 3.1: Wood 1998:230 Touristic Experience of Ethnicity</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ethnicity becomes increasingly an object of purposive self-consciousness consumption of commodities and experiences for sale in markets</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ethnic commodities and experiences are increasingly simulated through themeing, staging, and re-creations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ethnicity becomes the object of a socially constructed gaze out of complex interactions between a variety of insiders/outsiders</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Becomes part of an ever wider range of social activities and sites</td>
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and is further demonstrated in participants narratives in Chapter 4, particularly when one member speaks of a puja and says, “for a moment, our differences didn’t matter….we were all Indian”. Arjun Appadurai (1996) discusses the emergence of diasporic communities resulting from global migration as one of the key factors shaping modern identities, and identifies tourism as a contributing variable in the diasporic identity development.

Tourism is a major mechanism by which de-territorialization of cultural functions (Duval 2004) as tourism affects which ethnic identity markers are chosen to symbolize group membership (Wood 1998). It can create a ‘pluri-local’ or hetro local’ (Zelnsky 2001) community to which they can belong (Papstergradis 2000). Urry (1990) discusses the construction of identity through the tourists’ gaze, this distant and often nonverbal interaction of watching and being watched. Sharon Gmelch (2004) expands on the tourist gaze, offering multidirectional gaze between host, guest, and third party, resulting in a co-construction or structural coupling (Foley 1997) process of identities and evolving expectations. It is in this space that Urry (1990) identifies the borderzone and argues the force of the tourist gaze on the chosen performative or creative presentation of self, which can be said for both the visited and the visitor. This research focuses on the impact of the presentations of the group onto the on looking and sometimes participating
international Indian student. Participants shared their thoughts such as what was similar, what was different, what was missed, or as performers, what they tried to present. This is highlighted when participants said, “I love seeing how people here celebrate these pujas differently…it’s interesting and exciting to me” or “there is so much missing here… I wish you could come to India and see how it is really done…but then again there are new fun things done here too” and as one member said, “I get to show everyone how we really do it in Mumbai”.

Robert Wood (1998) outlined three principal conceptual strands that bind tourism with ethnicity, ethnic relations, and ethnic identities, which Tim Coles and Dallen Timothy (2004) identified as applicable to diasporic groups, illustrated in [Box 3.2].

Travel and tourism have crucial roles to play reflexively in the processes of learning and self discovery that define the fluid, constantly unfolding nature of diasporic identities (Hollinshead 1998, Lei 2007), both positively and negatively (Stephanson 2002, Duval

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<th>Box 3.2: 3 Conceptual Strands that Bind Tourism with Ethnicity, Ethnic Relations, and Ethnic Identities Coles &amp; Timothy 2004</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Tourism becomes a form of ethnic relationship (Among groups and between them) (Van der Burghe 1980, 1994)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Tourism plays a role in the development of touristic ethnic cultures in which interactions with tourism becomes the construction of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Through the de-differentiation of the tourism realm, tourist modes of visualization and experience become characteristics of the expression and consumption of ethnicity (Picard &amp; Wood 1997)</td>
</tr>
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2003). This is reflected in diaspora studies in relationship to identity where, the original point of dispersal, the homeland, is often the focal point in the mediation of diasporic identity (Safran 1991).

“Diaspora identities are multi-faceted and composed of complexly interwoven strands of ethnicity, religion, and ancestry” (Coles & Timothy 2004:7). Stuart Hall (2003) asserts that in order to understand the diaspora we must understand the diasporic identity which comes in two forms; stable and unstable and use the two to inform one another. He suggests that the first part needs to be understood as a collective, as shared histories among individuals often affiliated by race, ethnicity, nationality, etc and considered to be fixed or stable. This is reflected in the cultural, religious, and historical meaning of these festivals. The second part is understood as unstable or metamorphic and contradictory…this is an identity marked by multiple points of similarity as well as differences with multiple presences and absences. The unstable is illustrated through the varying ways of celebrating these events, the different states and sects, and festivals that are not highlighted in some parts of India such as not all participants celebrating Saraswati Puja. This research is interested in the co-construction of identity within the Indian diaspora as is experienced by Indian international students attending cultural events and festivities produced by the Indian diaspora at large.
Van der Veer (1995) argues that the Indian Diaspora in the US maintains a continuing interest in its roots; “the search for an elusive and largely mythical India” (Hannam 2004:247) is the binding thread. The statement “you can never go home again” illustrates the being caught in between as well as insinuating home as it was once known is now a myth, it will never be the reality it once was. He goes on to say “those who do not think of themselves as Indians before migration become Indians in the Diaspora” (Van der Veer 1995:7). Whether local or international it is the journeying to these places that brings a diasporic population closer to their cultural center that embodies the sense of what it means to be a member of that culture (Ioannides & Ioannides 2004). Morgan and Pritchard explain that tracing the diaspora is not charting the movement of a group, but instead we must understand how a group continuously seeks to reinvent itself (Parsons 2000). I argue that these festivals are where you can see this reinvention as participants explain how they have changed.

**Being and Becoming**

In other words, as addressed in Chapter 1 in more depth, diasporic people are scattered and then regrouped into new parts of becoming (Braziel & Mannur 2003). Morgan and Pritchard (2004) state that “such continuous reinventions are journeys of being and becoming which invoke and merge the mythologies of the new promised land
and the cherished sacralized memories of the homeland” (232). It is the dual conditions
of being and becoming of diasporas that Coles and Timothy (2004) assert have been
“under-valorized” in tourism studies and have yet to be fully recognized. Morgan and
Pritchard (2004) conclude that diasporic communities are continually reconnecting with
an otherness that originally represented the self, articulating narratives of others as self
and self as others through explorations of travel and home.

Diaspora is both continuous through cultural maintenance and stability, and
changing through being dispersed into a new collective. Diasporic cultural conditions
result from on-going interactions between inherited traditions and the demands of the
host society (Schnapper 1999). As discussed in chapter 1, among a diasporic group there
is an idealized myth about the homeland, a group distinctiveness, and a common history,
producing a strong sustained ethnic group consciousness and sense of solidarity (Cohen
1997, Safran 1991, Che 2004). However, there is also a requirement to adapt on some
level to both the new environment and the new assemblage of members, producing a
cultural hybridization (Che 2004). This is reflected in the statement, “its like a new
India”.

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Hybridity

Hybridity can refer to the multiple senses of belonging created in the diaspora (Ong 1999), as well as the sense and perception of members as being in between cultures (Meethan 2004). In David Duval’s (2004) research, members of the diaspora who returned to the homeland for a visit (return visit as discussed in chapter 2) expressed a sense of being caught in between, as neither belonging here nor there (Stephanson 2002, Duval 2003). Nguyen and King (2004) refer to the idea of existing between two worlds as migrant travelers but not a full member of either. King (1994) goes on to say there is “a sense of belonging to or identifying with a way of life that has been left behind” (174) resulting in a nostalgic yearning. Not being able to return home and not feeling accepted here is reflective of existing between two worlds and being nostalgic for what once was. For Stuart Hall (2003), the diasporic experience “is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the negotiation of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a concept of identity which lives in and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity” (as quoted in Brazeil & Mannuer 2003:5). This negotiation of a necessary difference is demonstrated in Robert Wood’s (1998) research looking to diasporic identity through intercultural tourism, which he identifies as a dialogic construction. Participants feel they belong neither here nor
there, attending these festivals in pursuit of their mythical India, taking parts of what once was, with what now is, reassembling the pieces to form who they will become.

“Diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity – cultural linguistic, ethnic, national, etc- defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora” (Braziel & Mannuer 2003:5). In other words, diaspora identity is creolized or hybridized (Featherstone 1995, Freedmann 1999, Nurse 1999, Coles & Timothy 2004), shaped by a mélange of influences and constraints often social, political, and economic (Mitchell 1997, Urry 2000). "In this world of hybridizing identities, all manner of diasporic populations face tricky ordeals versioning their re-invigorated, their revised, or their newly adopted visions of ‘self’ and ‘tribe’” (Hollinshead 2004:39).

Hollinshead (2004) goes onto suggest that diasporic subjects conterminously exist between real and imaginary communities sometimes celebrating the richness of the transnational over soul and sometimes stumbling out of kilter as half souls, at times experiencing a sense of neither being nor belonging.

Radhakrishnan (2003) cites three phases of an immigrant identity through hybridization; phase 1 the individual suppresses their ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism and actively assimilate, phase 2 the individual reasserts their autonomy as a member of their home group, and phase 3, there is a hyphenated integration of ethnic
identity and national identity. It is the last phase, with the adoption of the hyphen, that the hybridization is formed. Hyphenated communities such as Irish-American, Italian-American, Indian-American, etc, represent a negotiation of self, the hyphen representing the compromise (Coles & Timothy 2004), it marks the dialogic and the non-hierarchic conjecture (Radhakrishnan 2003). For Homi Bhabha, the hyphen marks the enunciation; the performativity or the constant re-make and de-make of identity (Bhabha 1994, Hollinshead 2004), the location of culture, or rather the Third Space (Bhabha 1994).

**Conclusion: Third Space Identity**

Third Space realms and half-realms, are occupied by those who are both sometime insiders and sometime outsiders (Hollinshead 2004). Bhabha’s (1994) halfway locations of culture is manufactured and heavily iconic, an imaginary process, similar to the spaces of diasporas’ presentation of self (Hollinshead 2004). The culture of the diaspora is a constructed or an invented phenomenon that is never constant but rather constantly renewed and revised (Hollinshead), investing considerable psychological and social energy into maintaining expressions of their identity (Morgan & Pritchard 2004). In other words, Third Spaces can be the spaces in which the diaspora is able to perform their identity and in turn co-create their collective and individual selves. For this research these Third Spaces are the various festivals and cultural activities in which the diasporic
members are able to communally enact their nostalgic yearning and perform their collective memory. These particular Third Spaces are unpacked in more detail in Chapter 4 and used to explore the hybridization of the international Indian student diasporic identity through the lens of tourism and Homi Bhabha’s location of culture in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4: Third Spaces

Third Space realms and half-realms, are occupied by those who are both sometime insiders and sometime outsiders (Hollinshead 2004). Third Spaces can be the spaces in which the diaspora is able to perform their identity and in turn co-create their collective and individual selves. As explained in Chapter 3, in this research, Third Spaces are the various festivals and cultural activities in which the diasporic members are able to communally enact and perform their collective memory, which can shed insight into the hybridization of the international Indian student diasporic identity through the lens of tourism. This chapter focuses on the description of these spaces, the religious and cultural significances of these particular festivals, and the reality of their practice abroad [refer to Box 4.1 Hindu Calendar at the end of this chapter].

Organizations

In order to better contextualize the Third Spaces of this research, it is necessary to introduce the organizations responsible for hosting these cultural events. These groups represent the ‘hosts’ in some of these events, where members of these organizations make up parts of the larger Indian diaspora, but also hold a formal membership to their organizations. As discussed in Chapter 3, the formal group membership is the
demarcation between the ‘us’ and ‘them’. The ‘us’ or the ‘hosts’ are typically the producers of these Third Space events in addition to participating as consumers. On the other hand, the ‘guests’ or the ‘them’ are predominately the consumers even though they may participate in the event as performers.

ISO

The Indian Student Organization (ISO) (http://www.albany.edu/~indianso) is a student organization funded and housed under the Graduate Student Organization at the University at Albany. While, the group is identified as a graduate student organization, their membership is open to graduate students, undergraduate students, and alumni. They identify their membership as open to all but the clear majority of their members are students of Indian origin. However, there is another group on campus, the American Indian Student Association (AISA), also open to undergraduates and graduates, funded by the Undergraduate Student Association. Curious as to their differences, during my time with the Graduate Student Organization and interactions with various member of each group I learned that ISO is predominately comprised of international Indian students, while AISA is largely made of American born Indians or Indian students who have been raised in the United States for much of their lives. Since this research is centered on international Indian students, I focus in ISO.
In the ISO mission statement, they assert an “aim to create a social network amongst the campus community and give them an opportunity to continue enjoying typically Indian customs and traditions, here in the United States” (http://www.albany.edu/~indianso). Their major events are orientation social gatherings such as the welcome picnic, cricket, and hosting the annual Diwali festival. ISO also offers programs and services such as yoga and stress management workshops, carpooling opportunities, and assistance in housing arrangements. ISO also identifies a commitment to cross-cultural learning through incorporating the student population, faculty, staff, and the local community in their events, as well as participating in various programs and events sponsored by other student organizations.

As discussed in the Introduction, the participants in this research are members of ISO as are many of the Third Space events addressed. This means that members of ISO fluctuate between the hosts and guests position as they both hold formal membership as well as members of the community at large. ISO sponsored one of the Holi (a spring festival described below) celebrations, all of the Diwali performances (except for one in which the ISO executive board and members served as volunteers), and many of the cricket gatherings addressed in this research. They also played a vital role in other social gatherings such as housing arrangements as addressed in the introduction.
The Tri-City Indian Association (TRICIA) (http://triciany.org), founded in the mid 1960s and incorporated in 1975, is a non religious not for profit group that promotes educational, social, and cultural activities of the Indian community in the Capital District and adjoining cities. The major events for TRICIA are the annual Indian Republic Day festival and the yearly Spring Festival, in addition to laugh sessions, sporadic guest performers, guest lecturers, and family picnics. In attempts to encourage and incorporate youth into their service work and venue productions as well as fostering the development of young leaders, TRICIA created TYO (TRICIA Youth Organization), a youth branch of their organization for pre-teens and teens. TRICIA also provides health services through their Support Group, and opportunities for members over 60 to gather and socialize separately through the Sixty-Plus Group. In this research they sponsored the Spring Festival and Indian Republic Day venues and provided volunteers and supporters to other events such as the ISO sponsored Diwali.

Utsav

Utsav (http://www.utsab.org), legally registered by the name of UTSAB, Inc, is a non-profit organization that caters to the Bengali community of the Capital District. Their mission is to educate about and foster awareness and understanding of the Bengali heritage, culture and traditions [refer to Box 0.1 in the introduction for the states of
India]. Utsav carries out their mission through sponsorship of pujas or poojas (prayer rituals and worship festivals) specifically focused on deities, which hold a special importance among Bengalis such as Durga (Hindu Goddess of the Universe; discussed more below), Laxmi or Lakshmi (Hindu Goddess of Wealth; discussed more below) and Saraswati (Hindu Goddess of Knowledge, Music, Arts and Nature). Utsav is also known for their charitable outreach efforts within the community focusing on relief of the poor, the distressed, and the underprivileged. In this research, Utsav sponsored the Durga Puja festival, the Saraswati Puja, and provided volunteers for the TRICIA sponsored Indian Republic Day.

_Hindu Temple Society of Capital District_

The Hindu Temple Society of Capital District, also known as the Albany Hindu Temple (http://www.albanyhindutemple.org), was founded in 1976, and is a place of worship for the Hindu community. There are multiple temples in the Capital District region that cater to specific segments (Gujarati, Bengali, Kannada, etc) of the Hindu community, however the Albany Hindu Temple caters to all sects, offering services in multiple languages and pujas or poojas (prayer rituals and worship festivals) celebrated by various persuasions (denominations) of Hindu followers. Beyond religious services, the temple offers heritage classes, guest lectures, and community activities, often
produced by volunteers from the membership of the temple. The Hindu Temple Society of Capital District sponsored one of the Diwali performances addressed in this research, along with the Ganesha Chaturthi Puja, and one of the Holi celebrations. Similarly, the cultural center housed on the temple’s grounds can be rented by outside groups and was the site of the Indian Republic Day festivals sponsored by TRICIA.

The Spaces and Events

Diwali

Diw(184,623),(820,791)

Diwali, also referred to as Deepwali, is considered to be the Indian holiday for Indians in the United States (Khandelwal 2002). Derived from the Sanskrit term ‘dipavali’ glossed as lamp row, Diwali is commonly identified as the festival of lights.
While Diwali is an official holiday in India (as well as Nepal, Sri-Lanka, Mayamar, Guyana, etc), it is celebrated in various forms ranging from secular, spiritual, and religious practices. In the more religious contexts, Diwali is the period of time when Laxmi (Goddess of Wealth and Abundance) roams the Earth. People participate in family pujas (worship) in their homes, lighting candles and diyas, offering food and sweets, singing and praying at alters (referred to as temples) with pictures of Laxmi and other deities, seeking blessings of prosperity and happiness. Also seated in Hindu religious philosophy, Diwali represents the coming home of King Rama, his wife Sita, and brother Laxman, after killing King Ravana, who had stolen Sita, and was finally allowed to return to Ayodhya following a more than fourteen year exile. It is said that candles lit the path for King Rama to find his way home and the city was covered in lights celebrating Rama’s return.

From a place of spirituality, meaning not specifically aligned with Hindu religious philosophy, individuals claim that Diwali represents good over evil, light over dark. Diwali is celebrated over a period of 3 to 7 days with the biggest festival being held on the darkest night referred to as Amarsya or ‘no moon day’ (new moon). Similar to lighting the candles for Rama’s return or to celebrate Laxmi, candles and diyas are lit to drive away the darkness. Firecrackers are also lit on Diwali as means to drive away evil
spirits. This symbolic measure demonstrates the victory of good over evil (Bhatia 2007) similar to Rama saving his wife from her capturer Ravana. This evil can also come in the form of ill health, financial struggles, and failed interpersonal relationships. In turn, means beyond firecrackers are put into place to restore the balance of good versus evil, such as praying to Laxmi for prosperity, a marking of the new business calendar, and exchanging gifts with family and friends. For individuals who do not identify as religious or spiritual, customs reflective of their Hindu origins are still observed such as offering mitali of ‘sweets’ to family and friends, cleaning houses to start anew, setting off fireworks and lighting candles.

In the United States, Diwali takes a different form, and traditions and customs adapt to the new environment. A major complication in following the Diwali traditions as they are celebrated in India is that it is not a national holiday in the United States. This puts limitations on individuals’ availability and flexibility to host the multiple day festivities. However, people still offer their family pujas on the actual day of Diwali (Amarsya) in their homes, and attempt to attend the temple if their work and school schedules allow for it. In order to still hold one large festival every year, many groups will sponsor a Diwali celebration on the weekend closest to Amarsya as possible. There are also restrictions environmentally, being too cold outside, and rules formally placed on
the lighting of candles either in number (Khandelwal 2002) or in particular spaces, in which people have responded by holding their events indoors and incorporating battery powered candles. The Diwali events I am focusing on here demonstrate similar obstacles as addressed above, such as date concerns and fire hazards, but more importantly focused on the role the celebration plays in the coming together and maintaining an expression of Indian-ness abroad.

As I discussed in the introduction, the ISO Diwali festival was my first exposure to these Third Spaces of international Indian students celebrating a piece of home abroad. During the course of my research, I attended six Diwalis and participated in five Diwalis, four sponsored by ISO and two sponsored by the Albany Hindu Temple (I only participated in one). For ISO, Diwali is their major event. Almost every single participant in this research assisted in the production of at least one of ISO’s Diwali events, more than half participated in performing at one of the events, and all attended at least one.

My first year, they held their show in the small theatre on campus and a dinner and after party by the main campus cafeteria. Decorations consisted of one string of lights and a small sign with ISO’s information. The event opened with a brief welcome and the Indian national anthem. There were singers, keyboardists, tabalists, guitarists, dancers, and group organized skits. The performers were all University at Albany students who
gave their own time to preparations and all Indian in composition, except for the belly-
dancing group, which was a mixed population student group, and our group, which as I
outlined in the introduction was also mixed. During the show, audience members would
sing along to their favorite songs, cheering loudly and whistling for their friends and the
sometimes-nervous performer. After, everyone headed to the Campus Center to enjoy the
food catered by a local Indian restaurant and music played on someone’s computer
speakers.

ISO’s Diwali event gained so much momentum on campus and in the larger
community following, partly due to the incorporation of showcasing other student groups
on campus, the next two years were held in the main theatre of the Performing Arts
Center (PAC) on campus, selling out both years, and their reception venue was the
Campus Center Ballroom. Both of these years, Indian flags were displayed, large signs
hung of the sponsoring organizations, strung lights and battery powered diyas were
strewn around the theatre, and on the corner of the stage was a statue of Laxmi with
flowers, pictures of other deities, and candles. The welcoming presentations were done
through power point with a brief lecture about ISO and Diwali, recognizing guests of
honor, including the President of the University and the Vice President of University
Development. Student groups such as a step team, hip hop dance club, salsa club, and
belly dancers participated, as did individuals outside of the university including Indian
Classical dancers affiliated with the Albany Hindu Temple and local Indian grocery store
and a Barn Dance Troop. The after party was held in the ballroom, which was also
decorated with the colors of the Indian Flag, where the catered meal was served buffet
style and there was access to the venue’s speakers. Each time, an impromptu dance floor
was made and event attendees and performers alike broke into dance, teaching one
another, singing along, and laughing.

The fourth year, the PAC was unavailable, so the entire event was held in the
Campus Center Ballroom. This meant there would be a smaller stage and fewer people
would be able to attend. However, it also meant they were able to put a more
concentrated effort in the decorations and perks, such as offering a henna station and an
information table regarding other community events and nearby Mandirs. As for
performances, due to limited space, ISO chose not to include any group or performance
that was not “Indian” in nature. Similar to the two years prior, there were lectures, power
points, songs, musicians, and dancers. A new addition was the incorporation of a fashion
show that represented the Indian states students had traveled from in order to study at the
University at Albany. Since, the venue was going to remain in the ballroom, immediately
following the show, dinner was served, chairs were cleared, and dancing commenced.
During all of these events, there was considerable excitement, pride, and sharing of stories of back home. For the first years, it was a completely new experience, not knowing how ISO would adapt Diwali to a one evening affair. Everyone expressed their excitement over the events and their happiness to be able to participate in Diwali in the United States. However, many of the participants narratives reflected on what was missing; no fireworks, no going to friends’ houses and playing cards, no buildings strung with lights, no celebrations in the streets, typically followed by a statement of “I miss home”. Yet, those narratives of the meaning of Diwali included people mentioning they bought new vessels, new clothes, and cleaned their homes starting their year anew. What was particular interesting were the group dynamics such as the conversation below.

A: “I bought new clothes for Diwali…well actually I just wanted new clothes and Diwali was a reason” [laughing]
B: “You went to the mall? I have never been…could I go with you sometime? All I did was clean my house”
A: “What?!?! Cool! Another reason to shop…I’m in!”
C: [Laughing] “I have never cleaned a home before…we always had workers…would you mind…?”
B: “I won’t clean for you [laughing] but I’ll help you”
A: “Great! I’ll make dinner….we could go shopping, come home and clean and eat”
D: “Well wait a minute! I want to be involved! How about we just play cards too….make it a real Diwali”
And the rest of the group joined in with more ideas, such as buying sweets and firecrackers, spontaneously resulting in the formation of a new Diwali party.

*Indian Republic Day*

![Image of children performing](Image)

**ABOVE:** Children representing various Heroes of India at Tricia’s Indian Republic Day

**Below:** RHTDMIC GOMAAAL, a Bollywood Fusion group from the University at Albany closing with a Yoga inspired piece to Vande Mataram

Indian Republic Day is celebrated on January 26, marking the completion of India’s transition into an Indian Republic in 1950. India gained their independence from Britain on August 15, 1947, with efforts led by the Indian National Congress. By November 26, 1949, the Indian constitution was passed by the constituent Assembly of India and officially adopted on what is now known as Indian Republic Day. In India there are celebrations to commemorate the Republic with the main event held in New Delhi with music, performances, and parades played before the chief guest of honor, the
President. Traditionally the celebrations come to a close with what is known as the ‘beating retreat’ where the three wings of the Indian military march to military bands, drums, pipes, buglers, and trumpeters.

For the Albany community, Indian Republic Day, is hosted annually by TRICIA at the Hindu Cultural Center. The event was a one-day affair that began with socializing and called to formal order with speeches made by guests of honor, the organizations’ leaders, and for two years in a row, Paul Tonko (New York Congressman) served as the Chief Guest of honor. After the formal welcomes, everyone gathered in the auditorium for entertainment. The center was decorated in the colors of the Indian flag; green, white, and saffron with flowers, pictures drawn by children, and pieces of sari fabric. All performances were asked to have a patriotic theme both in costumes and music. Participants ranging in ages from 3 to 75 sang songs dating over a period of one hundred years, played musical instruments such as the tabala and guitar, and danced.

Two performances were clearly the biggest hits. One was the closing performance of the heritage class children (ages 4-8) dressed as various heroes and heroines from Indian history, each reciting a brief narrative of whom they represent. The other was a performance put on by members of the ISO (some of which are participants in this research) who were dressed in the colors of the flag dancing to songs celebrating India’s
role in indentifying the number 0, sports victories, and a yoga inspired dance to Vande Mataram (literal translation ‘I bow to thee mother’); a hymn to the Mother Land.

However, it was the point in the performance when two members of the group entered to the song ‘Wavin Flag’ by the artist K’naan, carrying two Indian Flags, joining the dancers on stage, waving their country’s flag. The audience at this point burst into applause and cheers with some of the audience members standing up in honor of their flag. The group was asked to perform the dance one last time at the end. The event closed with patriotic music, socializing, and food provided by volunteers.

The majority of the attendees were families from the Indian diaspora community, along with international students from universities in the surrounding area including University at Albany students, and a few non-Indians who either knew someone from the Indian community or were simply interested in the event. Some of the participants in this research attended this event and shared their stories of pride and moment when they felt a part of something larger. “Seeing friends on the stage already made me proud to be a part of their [Indian international students] community, but being there, I felt proud to be Indian, and these strangers were also Indian, so I was a part of them”. During a group conversation they discussed the various political divides in India and how each represented a different perspective but for friendship they put aside their differences and
see themselves as Indian, citing Indian republic day as the festival of this friendship. “For a moment it wasn’t about being born here or there, which state you were from, what language you spoke, it was about being Indian”.

**Saraswati Puja**

The Saraswati Puja in its most literal form is the birthday celebration of Saraswati (the Goddess of Knowledge, Music, Arts, and Nature). Saraswati is depicted as having long flowing hair representing the flowing rivers and as a great beauty representing divine knowledge as alluring and desirable. She is dressed in white and seated on a white lotus petal symbolizing the purity of true knowledge and is a source Hindus turn to, to overcome lethargy, sluggishness, and ignorance. The Saraswati Puja, observed predominately in eastern and southern India, is also known as Vasant Panchami or the
first of two spring festivals, and the Basant Festival also referred to as the Kite Festival in the Punjab region. This annual celebration marks the beginning of the spring season approaching and closes with Holi.

Religiously, this festival honors Kamadeva (God of Love and Desire) and his consort Rati (Goddess of Desire and Sexual Delight). Tarakasur, a demon, was attacking the Hindu gods and Indra, the King of gods and Lord of the Heavens, in particular. It is said that, only the unborn child of Shiva and Parvati would be able to destroy the threat. Indra called upon Kamadeva to break Shiva from his meditation and set the mood for Shiva and Parvati. In order to set the atmosphere for love, Kamadeva brings on an early spring and passes Shiva’s guards masked as a fragrant breeze. Kamadeva, who carries his bow, made from sugarcane and sting of bees, and arrows of love decorated with lotus and mango flowers, shoots Shiva, who awakens and incinerates Kamadeva with his third eye. However, when Shiva learns of Kamadeva’s mission, he consummates his relationship with Parvati, producing their son Kartikeya who slays Tarakasur. Instead of destroying the ashes of Kamadeva, Shiva allows him to live, but in a disembodied form known as Anganga. Rati prays over Kama’s ashes for forty days, asking for a resurrection. It is said that Kama was reincarnated as Predymna, the son of Karishna, and cared for by Rati.
Elements of this story are reflected spiritually and secularly in the Saraswati Puja.

As discussed above, the celebration is the first of two spring festivals, analogous to Kamadeva’s attempt to bring on an early spring. There are forty days between the advent of the festival and Holi, representing the forty days Rati mourned Kamadeva. The offerings to Saraswati of honey, sugar, flowers, and mangoes parallel the bow infused with bee stings and sugar cane and the arrows of love decorated with flowers of various species such as mangoes. In some regions kites are flown by children to celebrate spring, which is sometimes said to reflect the transformation of Kamadeva as a spring breeze.

However, today there has been a shift in focus from Kamadeva and Rati, and a heavier emphasis on Saraswati who is invited to partake in the festivities; fed with offerings, entertained with dances and songs, and honored through prayer.

As addressed above, the Saraswati Puja is typically housed within other celebrations such as Vasant Panchami and recognized as the first of two spring festivals.

The formal puja was sponsored by Utsav at a local high school over a period of three days over a weekend. On Friday evening, individuals were invited to visit the temple erected for worship and to give offerings such as honey, flowers, and sugar. The option for prayer and offerings continued for the entire weekend. Performances were held on Saturday evening with Bengali songs, children displaying their talents of playing musical
instruments, singing, and dancing. The announcements and speeches were in Bengali and all of the food was traditional Bengali fare.

While the overwhelming majority of attendees were Bengali, I noticed students attending who were from regions in the south and west in addition to the state of Bengal. I asked what prompted them to come. Some said that this was an opportunity to attend a Hindu event where they could recognize Saraswati and the coming spring. One participant humorously responded with “hey we are masters’ students…who better to pray to the goddess of knowledge”. Another student who is from Calcutta, a city in Bengal, exclaimed “isn’t it great?.. I get to celebrate my home and share my culture with my friends!”. Another student from the state of Punjab said “I was secretly hoping there would be kites”. As discussed above, in various parts of India, and particularly in the state of Punjab, the Basant Festival is celebrated with flying kites.

Flying kites was a common theme in our conversations when discussing what were the most favored festivals in India and what do they miss here. 27 of the 30 participants brought up kites at least once, referring to the practice as sankrati or basanti. Some said sankrati was its own festival, while others suggested that it was housed in the larger Basant Festival. However, both of these festivals housed the puja of Saraswati, and just the thought of her birthday evoked a hope and a desire to fly kites. This prompted an
excited group uproar of kite flying stories, stealing people’s kites, cutting kite strings, and flying their kite higher than their friends, closing with one passionate kite enthusiast to exclaim... “just you wait until we fly our kites….in April”, everyone burst into laughter.

Holi

Holi is the spring festival of colors and love celebrated as a national holiday in India and widely celebrated in Nepal. Holi marks the welcoming of spring and the farewell to winter, starting forty days after Saraswati Puja (as discussed in Saraswati Puja). The night before Holi is the Holika Bonfire where people gather to sing and dance and prepare for the following day’s festivities. The next day, Holi, is a free for all festival of colors. Family, friends, and strangers, chase one another with colored powders, water
balloons and water guns, drenching and dousing one another in the spectrum of the
rainbow. During the fun, drums and musical instruments are played, as groups move from
place to place, throwing colors and catching up. The event closes in the evening with
everyone dressing up, visiting family and friends welcoming spring.

Two prominent religious myths are honored during Holi. The first is of Holika,
the evil sister of the demon king Hirahyakshipu. Hirahyakshipu was granted a boon or
‘blessing’ which made the demon king virtually indestructible, making him arrogant and
demanding that all should worship him and him only. Hirahyakshipu’s son Prahlada,
however, disagreed with his father and continued to openly worship Vishnu, the supreme
God of one of the sects of Hinduism. Outraged at the perceived betrayal of his son,
Hirahyakshipu called upon his sister Holika to destroy him. Holika arranged a meeting
with Prahlada, wrapping herself in a fire resistant shawl, planning a fire that would kill
Prahlada. However, when the fire started, the shawl flew off Kholika, leaving her to burn
to death and encased Prahlada, ensuring his safety. It is this story that is reflected in the
Kholika Bonfire the night before Holi.

The second tale is of Krishna’s (the eighth incarnation of Vishnu) divine love for
Radha (the original Goddess or Shakti). As a baby, Karishna was poisoned through breast
milk, resulting in a loss of his skin pigment and eventually his transition into his dark
blue skin color. As he got older, he fell in love with Radha but was afraid to be dismissed by her or any other girl due to his appearance. Krishna’s mother encouraged him to approach Radha and playfully color her face. Krishna does as his mother says and Radha and Krishna fell in love. It is from this act of humor and love that colors are used in the Holi celebration.

As discussed above, Holi marks the beginning of spring and the end of winter. It is also a time when people are supposed to forgive and forget disagreements, debts, and troubles. The festival represents an encouragement to repair broken friendships and to make new friends through the playful acts with water and colored powders. This was evident in both the Albany Hindu Temple and the ISO sponsored events. Prior to the Holi festivities, participants shared stories of India’s Holi events, explaining how the streets were filled with colors and comparing ‘war’ stories of who had been ‘gotten’ the worst and who had been a part of a team who had truly ‘gotten’ someone else. Deciding whether or not to attend the upcoming celebrations, participants checked with one another to see if they were going with statements of “if you go, ill go”.

Upon arriving at both of these events, I was immediately greeted by smiling faces, cheers of ‘Happy Holi’, and a gentle placement of their color powered hand onto my face. Clearly restricted by space, these events were confined to reserved grounds; the
grassy fields next to the Mandir and a parking lot of the university’s Interfaith Center.

Since accessing water was difficult, much of the celebration utilized dry colored powders.

After a gentle and warm welcome, everyone was fair game. DJs were set up, providing musical entertainment as everyone ran around with bags of color, covering their friends and foes, and leaving the space behind as an abstractly painted canvas. During the ISO’s most recent celebration, a hose was located with comments of “now its about to be a real Holi” but only able to reach so far, resulting in people dragging their friends to a target zone, getting hosed down and covered in fresh powders mixing with the water. The events closed with everyone helping to clean up the space, friends gathering and reconnecting, and groups of completely colored individuals walking to their cars singing songs of home out loud.

When speaking with the participants after the events, everyone was excited to share stories of various people who had be captured and colored or sprayed with water. Pictures were displayed on Facebook with captions directed to loved ones back home reading

- “Holi in the USA”
- “Wasn’t the same but sure was fun”
- “Our version of Holi”
While many of the participants expressed the marked differences between celebrating Holi back in India where entire communities are involved, bands, everyone is able to run in the streets, versus here where everyone is corralled in a considerably smaller space, the major narratives were of how good it felt to be able to celebrate some form of Holi.

- “Holding those colors was like being home”
- “I never thought I would get to play Holi in the United States”
- “playing Holi makes me so happy I don’t care where I am or how much space!”

Spring Festival

The Spring Festival is not a festival celebrated in India, but rather is a manifestation of the Indian diaspora’s desire to celebrate their cultural diversity. This festival, sponsored by TRICIA, is an annual event of music, dancing, food, clothing, jewelry, and more. The event is held in the Empire State Plaza, which has space for 2,400

136
people at any one time. There were a series of speeches given and performances on the main stage, while the perimeter of each level was occupied by various vendors selling saris, jewelry, and spices, stations for Henna, and sections reserved for meditation and reflexology massages. Outside the main room was a corridor for the food vendors to sell foods from all over India and a space for people to sit, chat, and relax.

Some members of this research attended and some were also performers in the event and all shared how shocked they were to see such a massive event designed to celebrate Indian heritage. During the event, I witnessed University at Albany Indian international students linking up with friends, Indian and non, pointing out different vendors of interest and singing loudly to their favorite Bollywood songs while groups performed. When interacting with non-Indian friends, there were descriptions of the dances, songs, and clothing and excited statements of “this is from my state!”, often followed by an impromptu dance interlude. Others were excited to be able to purchase traditional clothing at a “somewhat reasonable price…right here in Albany.”

As was the case during some of the other festivals, participants saw this event as an opportunity to network.

- “I met this guy who is also Rajasthani and from the same town as me who works at a bank and said I should come talk to him!”
- “I was talking to one of the coordinators who suggested I consider becoming a member of TRICIA and volunteer and can meet more people”
“I was talking to one of the vendors and she knows a friend of mine from back home, who use to study here, and she invited me to have dinner with her family!”

This festival in particular highlighted networking opportunities and solidifying cross-cultural friendships.

_Ganesha Chaturthi_

Ganesha Chaturthi is the Hindu festival of Lord Ganesh (the God of Wisdom, Prosperity and Good Fortune). Lord Ganesh is the child between Lord Shiva, also known as Parameshwara or ‘the Supreme God’ and Parvati, the Motherly Goddess, and is best known for possessing the head of an elephant. This image is derived from the story of Lord Shiva coming to visit Parvati who was guarded by her sandalwood pasted statue son Ganesh. Neither Shiva nor Ganesh knew they were father and son, and Ganesh denied entry to Shiva, who as the supreme god, was outraged and cut off Ganesh’s head. Once learning the truth of who Ganesh was, some say devas (other deities) and some say Shiva
provided Ganesh with the head of an elephant and was declared by Shiva as superior to all other deities.

Today, during the Ganesha Chaturthi festivities, statues are erected in his honor and blessed by priests, symbolically representing Parvati breathing life into her son. The festivities typically transpire over a ten-day period and while celebrated across India, in Nepal, Thailand, and Cambodia, are predominately celebrated by the states of south central India [refer to Box 0.1 in the introduction for the states of India]. There are often competitions among communities in India, particularly in the state of Maharashtra, for the design of the largest or most elaborate Ganesha statue, which is then on the last day of the celebration, marched through the streets and immersed in a body of water. Individuals and families also bring their smaller Ganesha statues from their home and submerge them into the water.

Similar to Diwali, adaptations have been in the United States, trimming the festivities to a few days of puja over the proceeding weekend of the fourth waxing moon, closing with a festival with performances and often some symbolic immersion of the statue into water. I attended and participated in the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities in Albany, sponsored by the Albany Hindu Temple in the Hindu Cultural Center. When entering the cultural center auditorium, there was a statue of Ganesha where offerings
could be made of food, incense, and candles. The event was predominately focused on
dance and vocal performances, most of which included at least one song addressing
Ganesh. The performances were done by students from the temple’s heritage classes,
members of the temple, and Indian international students from the University at Albany.
The event closed with food, music, and socializing and many people sharing stories of
their favorite Ganesha Chaturthi story from home.

As mentioned above, while many celebrate Ganesha Chaturthi in India, it is the
state of Maharashtra that is known for their production of large Ganesh Statues and
elaborate celebrations. Many of the participants in this research are from Maharashtra and
particularly from the city of Mumbai (once known as Bombay). These participants in
general were very excited about the celebration and were eager contributors in the
conversations regarding their favorite experiences back home. They expressed that being
able to share these stories gave them entryway into networking opportunities with
members of the Hindu Cultural Center and Indian diasporic community. “I heard one
man talking about this Mandir and their famous Ganesha statue known to be the
largest….I too had been there and decided to share my tales…next thing I know we were
talking about when I will be graduating and plans for my future”. Others expressed a
longing for home during this time with one reminder “but I’m not in the states for Ganesha, I’m here for school”.

Others shared similar concerns to those described regarding Durga Puja, about the lack of information and transportation. “I didn’t know, and even if I had, the bus wouldn’t have gotten me there”. Those who were unable to attend, or chose not to, celebrated the puja in their own ways such as wrapping the prayer threads around their wrists, listening to music that spoke of Ganesha, and some watched movies that incorporated Ganesha especially popular Bollywood films. During the time of these interviews, the Bollywood film hit Agneepath had been released, which had songs showcased in other performances such as Diwali, but had a musical scene ‘Deva Shree Ganesha’ that highlighted various elements of Ganesha Chaturthi back at home. During a group conversation, participants brought out their laptops and played it, explaining to me what was similar and different from how they themselves practiced back at home and one individual stating “I celebrated by watching this movie…it still gets to the point!”.
Durga Puja

Durga Puja is the worship of Goddess Durga (Goddess of Victory of Good over Evil), one of the many forms of Parvati. This puja is observed predominately in eastern India in the state of Bengal, but also in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir, Kerala, Gujarat, and Punjab, as well as in Nepal. The festival takes on multiple forms dependent on the location, ranging from a period of 5-10 days, and is referred to as Akalbodhan or ‘untimely awakening of Durga’, Sharadiya Puja or ‘autumn worship’, Sharadostab or ‘autumn festival’, and Durgastava or ‘the festival of Durga’. According to Hindu scriptures, Durga is supposed to be celebrated during the spring in a festival known as Basanti Durga Puja, however today the festival is honored in the fall. There is no clear point at which the transition from celebrating in the spring to celebrating in the fall or
autumn, but is why it is at times referred to as Akalbodhan or ‘untimely awakening of Durga’. However, regardless of which tradition is celebrating Durga Puja, all believe this event to be a festival of good over evil.

Just as there are multiple forms and names for this particular festival, there are various stories, which are honored and celebrated. She is referred to as the Goddess of Victory of Good over Evil for multiple reasons and one simple demonstration of the victory of good over evil as Durga defeated the bull demon Mahishasura. Similarly, there is the story of Lord Rama who prayed to Durga, asking for strength and power when he killed Ravana, once again good prevailing over evil. It is also said that this puja celebrates Durga’s annual visit to her parents with her children, Laxmi, Saraswati, Ganesha, and Kartikeya, before returning to reunite with Shiva. Finally there is the honoring of Durga as the Mother of Nature as she holds nine types of plants in her nine hands representing her nine divine forms as a Goddess.

During the Durga Puja festivals, the various stories are celebrated in multiple ways, bringing regions that celebrate this puja to a standstill beyond the celebrations. For the festivities, there is a heavy emphasis on entertainment through dances, song, and musical production, particularly in the Gujarati region where garba brings family and friends to engage in this social dance. Families visit one another bringing mitali or
‘sweets’ to one another, similar to Durga visiting her family. Idols are made in Durga’s honor and immersed in water on the last day. People say that Durga evokes a sense of pride and desire to be good and courageous, which sheds insight into Durga’s iconic image for the Indian Independence movement.

Just as the Saraswati Puja, Diwali, and Ganesha Chaturthi festivals, in the United States, there is not the same flexibility to celebrate during the week. The festival tends to be celebrated as close to Dessehra or Navarati (the closing day of the festival) as possible. Temples (or alters) are erected with Durga’s idol where offerings can be made, performances of dance, singing, and musical talents are staged, feasts are prepared, and sometimes films are shown. Utsav hosts the Durga Puja in Albany, at a local high school. Upon entering the auditorium, you are greeted with a large temple with a statue of Durga and her nine arms surrounded by candles and offerings of food.

There were speeches given, predominately delivered in Bengali, that shared the stories of good over evil. There were dances and songs put on by members of the Utsav community and a feast prepared for everyone to socialize and celebrate. A smaller set of individuals from this research attended the puja. Many said they did not know it was happening and never thought a Durga Puja would be celebrated in the United States. The overwhelming response was…
• “had I known I would have gone”, “seriously?? I would have gone….but how would I have gotten there?”
• “I wish there was a place we could look all of this up”.

Those who did attend made remarks that they had no clue what the speakers were saying since it was in Bengali asking me “so is this how you feel every time you come to one of our events?”, but following up with “just being here feels good”. Some participants expressed that not everyone celebrates Durga Puja back at home, but as one individual put it “while in the US….why not celebrate it all?”

Cricket

“This game, cricket…and this country, India…the not-umbilical yet more-than-umbilical link between the two, the love that’s close to madness, the giddy schizophrenia of adoration changing to abhorrence with just one ball…” (Majumdar 2006:13).

Throughout my interviews and group meetings, participants would be addressing another topic such as a festival or language and cricket would enter the conversation. I asked how cricket fit into all of this and received the response “cricket fits into everything”. It was at this point I decided I need to explore the topic further, attend friendly games and eventually partook in the games as a regular participant. As mentioned above, ISO would create opportunities for everyone to gather and play cricket.

There was also an informal group that would arrange through word of mouth to meet at Albany High School regularly during the fall, spring, and summer to play, and people would play in their homes. Both ISO and the Albany High group would pull group
resources from individual donations to purchase bats, balls, and wickets. Attendees were typically male, although females were invited and welcomed to join, and came from backgrounds of predominately India and Pakistan, but also Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

According to John Leach (2007) on his website ‘From Lads to Lords’, Cricket is a game originating in England and dating back to the 16th century and through the expansion of the British empire was brought all over the world. It is a bat and ball game between two teams comprised of eleven players centered on two wickets representing runs and outs, each team trying to get the highest amount of runs. Games can range from 20 overs (1 over = 6 balls) per team to a five-day game known as a test match. Formal rules are governed by the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Marylebone Cricket Committee (MCC), however many informal game rules exist and are negotiated.

As Boria Majumdar discusses in his ‘Illustrated History of Indian Cricket’, modifications are sometimes needed to play the game… “we have played cricket our own way…we have internalized the game and produced our own interpretations…in the by-alleys of every Indian town, we have adapted the rules to suit the conditions…” (Majumdar 2006:25). This was evident when accommodations were made for uneven numbered teams playing ‘last batter’, or when there were not enough people to play and
everyone would field whether their team was up to bat or not. The most drastic adaptation I witnessed was with kitchen cricket. This is played within some people’s homes using tennis rackets as the bat, the garbage can as the wicket, and outlining rules such as you must catch the ball with one hand in order for it to be an out, or hitting a particular wall is an automatic six points. Typically kitchen cricket resulted from friends hanging out and someone tossing around a tennis ball that was within reach. Sometimes at the end of a night of dancing or partying would result in a group decision to cap the night off with pizza and a game of kitchen cricket. Which ever it was, it was clear there was a sense of camaraderie and community when playing cricket.

Some of the participants were very serious cricket players back in India and were looking for opportunities to play competitively during their time in the United States. Others explained that back at home they usually did not play, but while abroad found themselves coming to the cricket games or playing regularly. When I asked why, people explained that Cricket was an opportunity to feel like being in India, it evoked memories of childhoods and friends back home, it was a chance to be Desi for a little bit. One person shared with me “I miss my country and cricket lets me taste home through the sounds, the language, and the freedom to be who I am”.

I wanted to follow up this notion of freedom through cricket. Many people stated
that cricket served as a source of physical activity and a pastime other than studies.

However, a recurring sentiment was this idea of community and a sense of knowing and belonging. People explained that being around a Desi community, much like having Indian roommates, allows for a freedom to be themselves. These felt needs were expressed through statements such as…

- “Being at cricket, I know how to behave, to talk, what to expect”
- “We all speak the same language or at least a language similar (such as Hindi and Urdu) and can free our minds and say our jokes”
- “Playing cricket allows me to be wholly Indian for a while with people who are experiencing what I am being here”

These statements are supported when Boria Majumbar (2006) wrote: “we reinvented a game and found ourselves reflected in it” (30).
Conclusion

These Third Spaces create what the participants identified as opportunities to ask who, what, how, and why. “Participating in these events, even if they are ones we wouldn’t back at home, they expose you to a more settled community”. Many came to the United States being told that members of the Indian diaspora would not be open to international students since they would not be truly considered apart of the diaspora group. However, what they claim they found instead was opportunities to socialize, network and find a better way of life. A deeper analysis of how these Third Spaces have impacted the participants in this research is found in Chapter 5. One participant responded to the idea that coming to the United States changes you by saying, “this environment does change you, but it creates a new you, and one I like even more”.
Box 4.1: Hindu Calendar: Working from the inner rings out- Georgian Months; Seasons; Hindu Months, Moon Phase, Festivals and Pujas
Chapter 5: Analysis

A Brief Case Analysis: Spring Festival

“RHTDMiC Gomaal is here,” shouts one woman to the TRICIA executive board and Spring Festival volunteers gathered at the front of the stage. It is 8 a.m. and our group has arrived at the Empire State Plaza for a final dress rehearsal. As we make our way to the stage housed in the convention center, we pass by vendors setting up their booths and wares, sleepy children entertaining themselves as their parents prepare the space for the event, and other performers receiving their instructions for the day. There are technicians working on the staging lights and sound checks, choreographers marking the stage with tape, and woman laying out saris to be hung as the stage backdrop. We wait our turn watching other performers walk through their dances, singers checking their microphones, and musicians tuning their instruments. After a final run through, performers were dismissed to make their last preparations for the show.

Walking around the space with a capacity for 2000 people, vendors are setting up their tables, display cases, and clothing racks. They are selling traditional clothing such as saris, lenghas and salwar kameezes, jewelry such as bangles and bridal sets, and multimedia such as Bollywood DVDs and audio CDs, both traditional and contemporary from all over India. Food vendors are preparing their dishes of dosas (a large flat bread)
panipuri (an unleavened fried crispy bread pocket filled with a flavored water spiced with tamarind and chili and sometimes combined with potato), fryers for items such as bread pakora (a fitter) and samosas (a fried bread filled with chilies, potato, lentils and sometimes meat), and mitali (sweets) such as jalebi (a fried sweet encased in a crystallized sugar coating). Other booths are spaces for Mehndi (henna: a paste artistically administered to the body, typically hands, arms, and feet in intricate designs), meditation, and yoga.

The doors to the public open promptly at 12 p.m. People of all different backgrounds filter through the space looking through their programs for performances and vendors they are interested in seeing as instrumental Indian music is played softly over the speakers. Many of the international Indian students from the University at Albany arrive together in groups and walk around browsing items to potentially purchase later. Members of our dance group meet up with their fellow students and nervously talk about the impending performances. Finally, at 1 p.m., people are encouraged to gather near the stage as the formal show is about to begin.

The majority of the performances are put on by children as they dance to Bollywood favorites or demonstrate their progress in learning traditional Indian arts. There are adult men and women singing classics from home, encouraging the crowd to
join in and dancing traditional dances such as Bharatanatyam, Garba, and Bhangra. There were a couple of Bollywood fusion groups, including ours, that danced to popular contemporary songs, dancing mixed styles of traditional and modern, inciting the crowd to sing the popular choruses and move to the beats. Throughout the performances, audience members were taking pictures and videos with their phones, SLRs and iPads. People clapped along to catchy beats, and loudly sang along to their favorite songs.

One item that was interesting to observe was where the international Indian students positioned themselves during the performances. Most wondered around and looked at items for sale, got Mehndi done, meditated, or found food. Some sat in the back rows, but not amongst the crowd, rather on the sidelines together. When a particularly popular song came on, they would find each other and sing loudly and dance the moves the stars of various films made common. However, when our group performed, they (the international Indian students) moved closer to the stage, whistling and hollering. During our performance, they would offer extra catcalls and cheers, making it known that we were their friends. After our performance, the international Indian students were waiting anxiously and excitedly by the door back stage. They complimented the group, pointing out their favorite parts, but were particularly interested in watching the rest of the show with their peers who had performed. They all spread out along the railing of the second
tier that faced the stage and as a group sang and danced, identifying songs or moves that came from their region of India.

After the show and the return of the instrumental Indian music over the speakers, the international students roamed around the venue together along with their non-Indian friends, discussing the show, items for sale, and food. There were conversations about the price of the garments and the excitement of the availability of traditional fashions in Albany, New York. Similarly, participants would taste the panipuri and tell stories of the best or worst panipuri they had back at home or the difference in the masalas used in the bread pakora or discussions of trying to make jalebi as a group. They would point out jewelry that resembled the tikka or bindi their sister or cousin had worn in their wedding, or designs that came specifically from their state. They took photos of their mehndi, later posting their images on Facebook with captions of “Henna in the US!” Others entered the meditation booth, teasing about their uncle’s use of ‘kapalabhati’ breathing (a type of meditational breathing through the nose being forced out by abdominal contractions, also known as the skull cleanser) or assuming a stereotypical meditational seat with crossed legs and arms extended over the knees, fingers forming the ‘OK’ symbol with statements such as “look I am a westerner meditating”.
I met with the participants after the event to ask their thoughts and to share their experiences. Participants were shocked and pleased that there was such a large event being held in Albany, New York, celebrating Indian heritage. “Who knew so many people from such different backgrounds would want to experience India?”. Others were excited to have an opportunity to purchase Indian fashions at a “somewhat reasonable price…right here in Albany”. Another common theme was networking opportunities as was addressed in Chapter 4. Although participants identified themselves as outsiders, they were able to connect with other members of the diaspora, finding connecting links such as being from the same state, knowing the same people, or opportunities to volunteer. Overall, participants saw this as an event to experience home abroad, solidify friendships, and create a new space in which to belong. The following statements highlighted these themes:

• “It is as though all of India has been condensed into one small package known as the Spring Festival”
• “No matter what state we come from, we know the same songs, recognize the same basic clothing, and dance each others dances and being here means we get to enjoy it together”
• “Talking to these people, laughing with my friends, and maybe having a job opportunity… its like for the first time I feel like I know who I am here….I finally fit”.

On the surface this event may appear to simply be a space in which member of the diaspora are able to perform their collective identity. However, when more narrowly
focusing on the international Indian student, we are able to see their role as the tourist particularly in how they frame their participation. Members of this research identified themselves as outsiders and their behaviors support their assertions. Although they shared the space with individuals from various backgrounds, including members of the larger Indian diaspora, they displayed a sense of strangerhood as they collectively situated themselves along the periphery. Furthermore, their arrival together and desire to come closer to the stage only when other members of the international Indian student body were performing, illustrates the separation of ‘them’ and ‘us’. This was further highlighted as the non performing international students waited for their performing friends by the back stage door and continued to enjoy the event with their friends, their ‘us’.

Participants were able to engage with this Third Space as both insiders and outsiders. Members of this research demonstrated their insider knowledge as they explained aspects to their non-Indian friends or when proudly identifying something as from their home state and alternately being the outsider when it was from a State they were not. Their exchanges of what was similar to home and what was different highlighted their collective memory and nostalgic relationship to their land of origin while also noting the adaptations and differences in their new home abroad. These
adaptations emphasize the role of hybridity in both event production and identity.

Participants posting pictures of their Mehndi on Facebook with captions such as “Henna in the US” or entering the meditation booth proclaiming to be meditating like a westerner, demonstrate a sense of novelty of these opportunities, otherwise mundane back home, to be experienced abroad. Statements such as “no matter what state we come from, we know the same songs, recognize the same basic clothing, and dance each others dances and being here means we get to enjoy it together” underline a sense of group identity of Indian-ness versus state or religious variations. These venues not only solidified pre-existing relationships, they also created opportunities for new connections through networking, further expanding their support base in addition to creating a space in which to belong. This was underscored when one participant said, “talking to these people, laughing with my friends, and maybe having a job opportunity… its like for the first time I feel like I know who I am here….I finally fit”.

The above description and observations made at the TRICIA Spring Festival, in conjunction with the responses and reactions of the participants and the brief case analysis, drives home the role and importance of these Third Spaces sponsored by the extended diasporic network in creating a space in which international student can be and become. The rest of this chapter connects all of the Third Spaces discussed in this project
and their commonalities to the literature and research questions addressed and raised in this project. This Chapter ultimately illustrates the significance of understanding these Third Spaces as tourist venues, serving as platforms for international Indian students to create a sense of being and becoming and the importance of the extended diasporic network.

**International Students**

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, international students are students “who have crossed a national border or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin” (UIS). The World Education Service cites international students or ‘foreign students’ “as students who are enrolled at institutions of higher education in the US who are not citizens of the US, immigrants, or refugees…[they] may include holders of F (student) visas, H (temporary) visas, J (temporary educational exchange-visitor) visas, and M (vocational training) visas” (WES 2012). At the University at Albany, the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), identifies international students as “students here on a visa of any sort” (The University at Albany Office of International Education International Student & Scholar Services 2013). Currently there are 1,481 international students enrolled at the University at Albany from 98 serving countries (The University at Albany
Office of International Education International Student & Scholar Services 2013). There are 160 Indian international students, 13 of which are undergraduates and 147 graduate students [refer to Box 5.1 to see the enrollment numbers during the time of this research].

At the University at Albany, Indian international students rank third in international student population numbers, behind China and South Korea. These numbers are reflective of the larger United States statistics for international student enrollment, as China is the largest serving country and South Korea vacillates between second and third with India (Chang 2013). As discussed in Chapter 1, international students from India currently account for the second largest population of international students with approximately 231,440 international Indian students enrolled in graduate study in the United States (Office of Immigration Statistics 2013). It is these numbers, reflective of the larger academic population, its contribution to identity, diaspora, and tourism, that make this research important.

| Box 5.1: International Student Enrollment at the University at Albany (ISSS) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | Total # of International Students Enrolled | # of Serving Countries | Total # of Indian International Students Enrolled | # of Indian International Students Enrolled as Undergraduates | # of Indian International Students Enrolled as Graduates |
| 2010 | 1286 | 94 | 102 | 11 | 102 |
| 2011 | 1179 | 84 | 115 | 12 | 103 |
| 2012 | 1311 | 86 | 133 | 12 | 119 |
| 2013 | 1481 | 98 | 160 | 13 | 146 |
Diaspora

This section highlights how the international Indian student population fits into the concept of Diaspora and its importance. Referencing back to Chapter 1, George Brubaker (2005) provided three core elements in his criteria for a diaspora; dispersion of space, orientation to a homeland, and boundary maintenance. Brubaker explained that the dispersion of space referred to a segment of people living outside of their homeland. In this research, the larger Indian diaspora serves as the collective and stakeholders, but it is the students who have left India to come and study in the United States and even more specifically, the University at Albany that is the focus, members who have been dispersed through education. Brubaker’s second criterion is the collective memory or myth of the homeland (Safran 1991), the ‘personal connection’. This is reflected in the stories of various pujas or festivals from back home with an almost idyllic or enchanted quality with statements of “there is nothing like a Diwali in India…lights everywhere” or when discussing sankrati “you have never seen so many kites…the skies are filled”. While these memories possess elements of truth and are reflective of how they recall their experiences, lights cannot be “everywhere” and skies cannot be “filled”, but rather they earn a mythical element in their retelling as memories of their homeland.
Finally, there is Brubaker’s boundary maintenance where there is a distinct or unique identity from the host community as a collective whole. This community expression is illustrated in the production of these pujas and festivals, particularly that of Indian Republic Day and the Spring Festival or playing of the Indian national anthem at Diwali, all of which centered on being Indian, exerting an identity connected to their homeland separate from where they currently reside. These elements, convey a sense of a common and distinctive origin from the United States, and as Robin Cohen (1997) discussed, a homeland that has claim on their loyalty and emotions as was observed during Indian Republic Day when the Indian flags entered and audience members jumped to their feet or when participants stated “for a moment it wasn’t about being born here or there…it was about being Indian”.

When discussing diasporas, beyond fulfilling criteria to be considered diasporic, there are the diasporic groupings; what kind of diaspora one is discussing. Cohen (1997) offered us five typologies as addressed in [Box 1.4]. Of the five, members of the Indian diaspora tend to either be labor or service, trade business and professional, or cultural hybrid and postmodern. Indian international students fall under trade, business, and professional, which as shown in [Box 1.6] is similar to Hannam’s (2005) category of the Brain Drain when looking specifically at the five major groups of migrants in the Indian
diaspora [Box 1.5], or Shri Sharma’s (2002) third category of the Indian diaspora, professionals and the educated elite of India. All three of these paralleling categories have an intention towards economic betterment, often through education. This is supported by participants’ statements of disappointment of not being able to attend the Ganesha Chaturthi followed by one student stating “but I’m not in the States for Ganesha, I’m here for school”. In response, one participant exclaimed “but we still need to have fun”.

Tourism

Tourism, as discussed in Chapter 2, defined in its most simplistic form, is the phenomenon of ‘leisure activity’ in which participant(s) are separated in some fashion from their ordinary lives for a period of time as is reflected in the sacred and profane dichotomy. Beyond the obvious temporal change from being at home, studying, or attending classes to attending the pujas, festivals, and cricket games discussed in Chapter 4, participants’ narratives revealed an emotional and mental retreat from the everyday. This was probably most explicitly shared when one participant was discussing the bonuses of attending these festivals where they were able to speak Hindi and they said “sometimes you just need a break from trying to think in English…” or similarly when discussing cricket one participant’s statement of “we all speak the same language…and can free our minds and say our jokes”. Although speaking in a language that would have
been considered a part of the mundane back at home, it now represented a mental
reprieve abroad and an opportunity to engage in lighthearted banter. Likewise the
statement “for a moment it wasn’t about being born here or there…” expresses a state of
liminality in relationship to the Indian Republic Day festival, a sense of being separated
from their everyday while celebrating their culture and heritage.

*Heritage Tourism*

Cultural heritage tourism typically is used to describe the tourism of legacy assets
and in this research is specifically centered on festivals that either originated in India or
celebrated Indian heritage. These festivals and folk performances are often utilized as a
tool for economic development (Fyall & Garrod 1998); capital in the form of both
financial and social. Most of the events in this research were free of charge; those that did
have an entry fee charged a minimal amount just to cover expenses and the cost of
production. However, these events were rich in social capital, which often results in
better opportunities to increase collective and collaborative networks (Lew & Wang
2004), enabling participants to act together (Putnam 1995), creating spaces of ethnic
pride.

The Indian Republic Day festival most overtly demonstrates a space of ethnic
pride as one participant said, “I felt proud to be Indian, and these strangers were also
Indian, so I was a part of them”. The latter portion of their statement expressing a sense of ‘being a part’ reflects a sense of the collective. Similarly, at the Spring Festival, the exclamations of songs being from one’s state, meeting someone from the same hometown, sharing with their non-Indian friends what items were, and being surprised about such a large event dedicated to celebrating Indian heritage, all reflect an ethnic pride. ISO Diwali illuminates the enabling of participants to act together, resulting in an increase of collectiveness. As mentioned in Chapter 4, every member of this research participated in at least one of the ISO’s Diwali celebrations. Comments of “it was our event” or “it brought us closer together” are demonstrative of a feeling of being a part of a collective and collaborative effort which, while not necessarily reflective of an ethnic pride, indicates a sense of group pride.

**Diasporic Tourism**

The collective and group pride is the center of diasporic tourism. As discussed in Chapter 2, diasporic tourism is focused on “tourism primarily produced, consumed, and experienced by diasporic communities” (Coles & Timothy 2004:1). It is not always an escape from the mundane and often possesses an underlying seriousness in nature and intentional engagement, making diaspora tourism markedly different than other forms of tourism. This is demonstrated in the majority of the Third Spaces addressed in this
research as many are rooted in Hinduism with festivals honoring different gods, temples erected in their honor, moments of prayer, and opportunities to give offerings.

Types of Diasporic Tourism: Return Visits

In Chapter 2, three different types of diasporic tourism were outlined; return visits, VFR, and nostalgic diasporic tourism. This research was originally more focused on the latter, however the participants addressed elements of the other two and in turn the emergent themes were incorporated. Return visits are when members of a diasporic community return to their homeland for a short trip. Participants in this research discussed both their experiences of visiting home as well as the desire to do so. In the Introduction of this research, one member explicitly stated they hoped to return to India that following year to celebrate Diwali with their family and friends. Others expressed similar sentiments of…

- “I can’t wait until this summer to go back for a couple of months”
- “Next December marks the marriage season and I get to go to my cousin’s wedding and eat my mom’s cooking”
- “I have applied for an H1 visa and need to return to India to sign the papers and…well hang out with my friends”

I had the chance to speak with many of them after returning to the United States, hearing stories about their adventures, getting to see family and friends, and experience their
country. But I also heard narratives that addressed a sense of no longer belonging there as they once did (discussed more below).

**VFR**

The second form, VFR, is when family and friends of members of a diaspora visit them abroad. During the time of this research, about a third of the participants’ had family and or friends visit them. Most shared that they were looking forward to having their families near them, to “have mom cook”, and to travel to other parts of the country or state “especially Niagara Falls”. Having family and friends visit, represented home coming abroad, it meant connections as well as opportunity to explore their abroad in a new way than their student budget would allow for. Since the trip is typically a minimum of two days of travel and the cost of flights can range from $1000-$2000, it meant their visit would average two weeks and sometimes would be as long as three months. These prolonged visits resulted in changes and sacrifices from the everyday they had grown accustomed in the States.

- “I have to make sure there is no meat in the house…it would make mom sad and dad very angry”.
- “Its just us guys living here and we never really clean…as in clean clean…but with mom that would be no good”.
- “I have to buy a proper bed, where would they sleep?”
One of the households had family coming for a visit and had to make alternative living arrangements for their roommate since they had become a coed home.

- “They would disown me if they knew…it is simply unacceptable.”
- “It means no partying, no clubs, no alcohol…I’m going to miss out on the fun”
- “I have to make sure there is no liquor, no beer, no evidence [laughing]”.

While, clearly excited to see their families, the latter set of narratives expressed changes that had taken place since they had come to the United States. Three categories emerged from these conversations of alcohol, opposite sex, and their vegetarian diet. As addressed in the Introduction, when discussing the role of family, participants explained that their parents called often, and sometimes daily, with reminders of no drinking, no dating, and to maintain their vegetarian diet.

*Alcohol*

“Back in India, I would never have drank alcohol…when coming to the states my father told me; when you meet Johnny Walker, tell him to keep on walking…now I drink every weekend”. While many of the participants who were in their first year still refrained from alcohol, those who had been here for a year or more said “just you wait…you are free now”. Those who had been here longer or those first years who did indulge in alcoholic beverages cited their drinking as both a privilege they enjoyed while
being overseas, but a negative as it would be an embarrassment to their families and something they needed to hide from their families if and when they would visit.

**Opposite Sex**

Prior to their arrival in the United States, all of the participants explained they hung out in large co-ed groups, that hanging out with the opposite sex was not something new. What was new was the lack of restrictions of the meetings and absence of curfews. Most everyone said they still tended to hangout in large groups, as it was customary and comfortable, however the notion of dating had changed. “Before we would hang out as a group and if you had a girlfriend, there was not this dating thing you all have here….we would talk on the phone, send each other messages, etc….and its understood if we really like one another we can go to our families and talk about marriage”. From this conversation participants began discussing arranged marriages. They explained that there is a sense of why date when you will most likely end up with that person. I asked if there was a sense of loss at this notion, and the majority of people who planned on following the path of the arranged marriage said “no”. There was an overwhelming preference however, to be linked to a U.S. citizen, which created a sense of cultural ease, and ideally someone from the same Indian state. “If my future partner is able to understand both life here as well as at home it would make the marriage better”. A few participants had dated
individuals who were not Indian and conveyed concern of family acceptance and the potential difficulty of both cultural expectations and the possibility of having to part ways.

*Vegetarian v Non-Vegetarian*

As I mentioned above, 26 of the 30 participants in this research, came to the United States as vegetarian, and at the time of these interviews, all but 5 of the participants had at least tried meat. Many pointed out that they would sometimes eat eggs back in India so why not try chicken. Others had taken the leap to other meats such as fish, pork, and in a few cases, even beef. Approximately 16 of the participants now identify themselves as eating non-vegetarian on a regular basis but 10 of them said they only eat chicken as a part of their non-vegetarian regiment. They rationalized their transformation to the limited choices when eating out or on campus but closed by saying they also simply enjoyed the taste. Similar to the alcohol concern with their families, they shared they would need to hide their new diet from their family, or when they returned home they would eat a strictly vegetarian diet.

VFR places the family and friends in the position of tourist, coming to see how their loved one is living in the diaspora. However, it is clear from these narratives, their visits have an impact on the participants’ “new” lives. With these visits comes both an
opportunity to reaffirm their bonds of kinship while there is an increased awareness of changes from who they were at home to who they are becoming abroad.

_Nostalgic_

Finally there is nostalgic diasporic tourism, a pursuit of the collective and personal memory with the diaspora tourist occupying the same space and time with other tourists (Coles and Timothy 2004), like the Third Spaces discussed in Chapter 4. This type of tourism, much like a pilgrimage (Ioannides & Ioannides 2004), creates a space for members of the diaspora to overcome feelings of separation from their homeland abroad (Nguyen & King 2004). Many expressed this sense of pursuit of the spiritual center of the collective and self when visiting different Mandirs. As discussed in the introduction, when they explained that the food, language, and simply being around other Indians, although strangers, fulfilled a sense of home abroad through statements such as “they may be focused on a tradition we are not from, but its more similar to home that being at the university”. This statement demonstrates a longing to experience home even if it is a different part of home than they are from.

Other examples of this attempt to overcome the sense of separation and seek connection to the collective in these Third Spaces is through the sharing of stories of how they were celebrated back home as compared to what they were experiencing. While they
began as statements of longing for elements missing such as the firecrackers at Diwali, flying kites during sankrati, or witnessing the submersion of Ganesh in the Arabian Sea, the conversations quickly turned into a group reminiscing, creating their own virtual experience, evoked by being situated in this new festival space abroad. Similarly comments such as those at Holi of …

- “holding those colors was like being home”
- “playing Holi makes me so happy I don’t care where I am…”

illustrate the ability to connect to home while celebrating a new version abroad. While not a traditionally touristic venue, yet a Third Space discussed in this research, participants expressed the ability of these Third Spaces to connect to their home and self while removed from India when playing cricket, stating “being at cricket allows me to be wholly Indian”.

Felt Needs

These articulations of nostalgia and connections to the collective convey the motivations and felt needs of the participants to engage in these touristic venues or as identified in this research, Third Spaces. As discussed in Chapter 2, felt needs in tourism studies are the desires, expectations, and hopes that propel members to seek out a cultural stimulation in order to make up for a shortcoming of an environment, which in this case is the separation from home and desire to reaffirm cultural bonds. Throughout our
conversations about why they attend certain events, missing home was a reoccurring theme.

\textit{Missing Home}

As would be expected, all of the participants expressed a sense of missing home. This sometimes came in the form of directly stating missing one’s parents, siblings, friends, etc. In other cases this was shared through stories of differences from the sounds, smells, and everyday interactions between the United States and India. Many of these expressions were shared regarding food, language, and impromptu gatherings. In other cases, it was missing the street vendors selling chai and puri, pick up games of cricket in the streets, and flying kites. One individual asked me why flying kites in the United States was illegal. When I told them it was not and is something people do in the parks during the spring and summers they responded with a smile and said, “at least there is that”.

Some of the sense of missing home was also a sense of a reduced quality of life in the States. “There is no time to have fun…I am always studying and now I also have to cook, do my own laundry, clean my own apartment”. Someone else claimed they were more focused back at home, that they felt more depressed in the US when they said “there is no sun here, no sense of a community, and more responsibility”. These
discussions revolving around elements of home missing in the festivals participants attended in the United States, such as flying kites during the Basant Festivals or sharing mitali and playing cards with friends during Diwali, to the explicit statement of “I miss home” are all exclamations of the felt shortcomings of being abroad. But it is how they reaffirm their cultural bonds through these events that are highlighted.

When participants shared their narratives of attending different Mandirs as a way to experience a piece of India, even if they cater to a differing sect of Hinduism than they come from, they demonstrated a desire to reaffirm their broader cultural identity of ‘Indian’ rather than that of Gujarati, Punjabi, or Sikh. When during a group discussion participants shared their disappointment in not getting to attend the Ganesha Chaturthi festival, they expressed the importance in experiencing that piece of home to minimize their longing for India, by watching the popular Hindi film Agneepath, focusing on the highlighted Deva Shre Ganesha portion of the movie. Then, there are those participants who did not play cricket back in India but either attended or played in cricket events in the States as an opportunity to feel like being in India. These are all examples of the sense of separation and yearning for home and participating in Third Spaces abroad as means to connect to the collective Indian identity and reaffirm their Indian cultural bonds.
Authenticity

As discussed in Chapter 4, these cultural events have been identified as Third Spaces that impact the formation of diaspora members’ identity. As Macleod (1997) explained, the negotiation of identity in relation to touristic venues can be understood through the discourse of authenticity. Authenticity is emergent and in turn negotiable, or socially constructed, informed by background knowledge, and reflected both in the individual and collective group identity formation (Cohen 1998). This research focuses on authenticity in relationship to experiences and representation by the diasporic members.

It is through the participants’ statements of what was missing that highlighted a sense of in-authenticity such as referencing the absence of kites, firecrackers, and live music. However what was particularly interesting in this research were those moments that indicated a shift from inauthentic to authentic. For example, when playing Holi, the simple inclusion of water through a hose evoked a sense of the real with declarations such as “now its about to be real Holi”. Although the hose was only able to reach so far and people had to be forcefully placed within range of the spray, this adaptation and inclusion of water shifted the experience from one of fun with friends and community members to one that was real or authentic. Similarly, referring to the conversation in
Chapter 4 in regards to Diwali with the four friends discussing what they missed in their Diwali experience and the plan to go shopping, make food, play cards, and exchange mitali, prompted the reaction of “mak[ing] it a real Diwali”. Although these festivals were “authentically” put on by members of the diasporic community, there was a sense of the sanitized assemblage made real through the incorporation of elements of their cultural experiences (water, games, sweets) that connected the authentic to these Third Spaces and in turn self and group identity.

**Presentation of Self**

One aspect of identity is the presentation of self and group through performances and encounters (Macleod 1997, Bhaktin 1986), as well as clothing, music, and dances, outside of the formal performance space, tying the community to their history and folklore (Abram 1997). Some of the sponsoring stakeholders of these Third Spaces provided stipulations of the music and costuming, needing to be patriotic in nature such as TRICIA with Indian Republic Day, or only Indian related or inspired performances as was the case with the 2013 ISO Diwali. Similarly, in 2013, there was the addition of a fashion show highlighting traditional garments of the serving Indian states. However, most of the performances, whether required or not were a nod to the homeland through music, costume selection, and dance styles.
There were the cases of the strictly traditional performances such as a Rajesthani plate dance during Diwali 2012 and the various Bharatanatyam dances that were performed at every single one of these venues. However, even in the cases of the Bollywood fusion performances at all of these Third Space shows (except for Indian Republic Day) and the Tribute to Indian Songs Through the Decades performance at Diwali 2012, there was at least an attempt to wear clothing that hinted at their origin, such as men wearing suits but incorporating a dupatta and the majority of the songs were from Indian films or radio. All of these performances demonstrate a desire on the part of the stakeholders as well as the participants to communicate ties to their history and folklore with an intention to evoke a sense of national pride from the audience.

Off stage there were presentations of self and Indian-ness through clothing, impromptu dances, and music. As part of the ISO’s Diwali celebrations, there were after parties that ended up in makeshift dance floors, group dancing, and the occasional jamming circle. Participants would connect their laptops or mp3 players to the speaker system and select their favorite songs from home. Often songs that had been highlighted on stage would be played, and members of that group would become the focus, showcasing a piece of their performance. Music from popular Hindi films with “known dance moves” (such as Chammak Chalo, Jalebi Bai, My Name is Shelia) would come on
and during the hook of the song, students would dance the choreographed moves of their favorite stars. There were also lighthearted battles to play songs from specific states. For example, the song ‘Ganpat’ from the movie ‘Shootout at Lokhandwala’ is a hip hop piece that opens with the line “Mumbaiii…”; students from Mumbai would take center stage on the dance floor and rap along with the song and show off their dance moves from home. Similarly bhangra or Punjabi songs such as Diljit Singh Dosanjh’s ‘Soorma’ and Imran Khan’s ‘Satisfya’ would prompt a similar response from students from the state of Punjab.

When attending these events, students who would otherwise be dressed in “westernized” clothing, would wear saris, lenghas, salwar kameezes, pathani suits, kurtis and kurtas. These Third Spaces served as a arena where participants were able to express their Indian identity through their clothing. I asked participants why they waited until these events to wear their clothes from home.

- “We don’t get to wear our clothes here [in the United States] freely, people look at us funny”.
- “It’s not appropriate here to wear our kurti or salwar kameez to class or to teach…it makes us stand out…but here [these events] we blend in and get to show off to one another”.
- “It’s too cold here to wear our clothes all year round…so we wait until its time to be Indian”.


These statements all reflect a sense of home and identity tied to clothing. In the everyday, these styles are perceived as too loud of a statement of being Indian, but in these Third Spaces, it is a chance to connect to their homeland and present a pride in being Indian. One girl put it so eloquently as she was dressed in her sari “sometimes a piece of cloth can be a good way to make yourself a little bit closer to Swades (‘home country’)”, communicating the link between the past and present locality and identity in the diaspora.

As discussed in Chapter 3 and demonstrated above, cultural tourism promotes cultural traditions of a diasporic group in their new homeland as well as a sense of pride within the diasporic community (Che 2004) and in this case, among the international Indian students. Whether this is pride demonstrated through clothing, performances, ability to share a piece of home abroad, or through statements of being a part of a larger whole, these events create spaces for reproducing and revaluing traditional and modern concepts of community and individual identity (Medina 2003, Little 2004). These diasporic Third Spaces focus on the diaspora identity where there is an opportunity to reconnect with an otherness that once represented the self, sometimes leading to a re-incorporation of dormant traditions (Lew and van Otten 1998).
**Reincorporation**

In this research, participants did not engage in explicitly dormant traditions, however they partook in activities they otherwise may not have. For example, some members began to play cricket while in the United States even though they did not play in India. The act of participating evoked memories of home and a chance to perform their Indian-ness or as one participant stated, “a chance to be Desi for a bit”. Likewise, individuals who did not dance on stage back home, now found themselves dancing bhangra (a dance style that originated in the State of Punjab) even though they were Gujarati and only knew garba (a dance style that originated in the State of Gujarat). These examples illustrate the diasporic cultural condition of the ongoing dialogic interaction of inherited traditions and demands (Schnapper 1999) where members of the diaspora are scattered and regrouped (Braziel & Mannur 2003) adapting to a new environment and reinventing themselves (Parsons 2000). They are demonstrations of Indian international students being and becoming (Morgan & Pritchard 2004) and in turn producing a cultural hybridization (Che 2004).

In the Introduction, one member of the Indian international student community stated, “you can never really go home again”. This narrative demonstrated a disconnect
from their homeland. Other participants shared a similar sentiment when discussing their accent or the way of life here versus there and with their statements of

- “…when you go back you feel like a bit of an outsider”
- “You don’t belong here…you don’t belong there”

These expressions of belonging neither here nor there, communicated both a sense of multiple beings and an absence of belonging resulting in a feeling of being caught in between and a longing for a way of life left behind (Nguyen & King 2004).

**Hybridity**

This nostalgic yearning to fulfill the sense of separation from home, led members of this research to participate in these Third Space events as an attempt to connect to what Van der Veer (1995) referred to as the elusive and largely mythical India. The concept of a mythical India is reflected in the retelling of experiences from home, as addressed above, with an orientation to the homeland, describing Diwali lights “everywhere” and when numerating kites with “the skies were filled”. In pursuit of home abroad, Hollinshead (2004) suggests that members of the diaspora live between these real and imaginary communities, marking the diasporic subjects’ identity with heterogeneity. As mentioned above, Stuart Hall (2003) explained that the diaspora “is defined, not by essence of purity, but by the negotiation of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity…[a] hybridity”. This diversity is, as Hall calls ‘necessary’, when a people from a large space
are dispersed, gathered in a new assemblage, and informed by differing cultural, linguistic, and national backgrounds within the confines of a new space (Braziel Mannuer 2005) resulting in a negotiation of identity through a dialogic construction (Wood 1998). These influences for the participants is represented by being in a different country, roommates from different states and speaking different languages, attending pujas that they would not have otherwise celebrated back home and playing cricket here even though they do not play in India, etc, resulting in a hybridized notion of self and group.

The hybridized identities of the diaspora are manifestations of their re-invigorated, revised, and newly adopted perceptions of ‘self’ and ‘tribe’ (Hollinshead 2004). The notion of family, their ‘tribe’ had broadened for participants from their familial networks back in Indian and their blood relatives also living abroad, to their roommates and close friends as demonstrated through family style dinners, sharing home temples, and explicit statements of “we are family now”. Their new family was no longer dependent on bloodlines or members of their city and state, but now was comprised of members from varying states, political beliefs, languages, and religious dogmas. Their ‘tribe’ expanded to begin to include members of the larger Indian diaspora through conversations and networking at these Third Space events. This is highlighted when one participant said, “I was proud to be Indian, and these strangers were also Indian, so I was
a part of them”. Similarly, during the interviews, participants did not refer to themselves as their State, religion, nor their language, but rather as Indian, making the ‘self’ a representative of the larger mosaic. This concept is supported by Van der Veer’s (1995) assertion that “those who don’t think of themselves as Indians before migration became Indians in the Diaspora” (7).

**Conclusion**

We have established that diasporic members are constantly remaking and de-making their identity where they are sometimes insiders and sometimes outsiders, in the space identified as Third Space (Hollinshead 2004, Bhabha 1994). Being and becoming Indian represents a hybridized identity of the parts of home and influences of abroad coming together in a new assemblage. The space between who they were, and who they are becoming, represents that area of not belonging here or there, it is where the dialogic transpires, the negotiation of the mélange of influences. However, through opportunities to network, whether discussing a mutual friend or to perform their identity through dance, music, and clothing, or to try new parts of their home through food, language, and participating in events, these Third Spaces serve as the communicative vehicle bringing diasporic members together, cementing a sense of an extended community. These Third Spaces create a platform to perform as well as co-create both group and individual
identities while renewing, reiterating, reinforcing, and re-inventing cultural norms and
values of home abroad.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research has looked to hybridized identity formation through Third Spaces within the diaspora. Focusing on international Indian students and touristic venues of festivals and cultural activities, this investigation looked to the production, consumption, and experience of participants and their presentations of ‘self’ and ‘tribe’. Participants’ narratives highlighted the transition from dispersion to re-assemblage, underlining the in-between, their space of neither belonging here nor there, and the dynamic process of being and becoming. Looking to identity beyond the host and guest dialogic, the location of culture is enunciated through hybridity in the diasporic Third Space.

This Research Contextualized

Diaspora

This project both answers and supports much of the literature in diaspora, anthropology of tourism, and identity studies as is demonstrated in Chapter 5. It broadens diasporic studies to include international students in general and Indian international students in particular. This inclusion could be representative of what Sunil Bhatia (2007) identifies as one of the many different collectives of the diasporic community, supporting Sharma’s (2002) and Hannam’s (2005) categories of the Indian diaspora which situates well into Cohen’s (1997) larger typologies of diasporas in general.
Tourism

Placing international students as one part of the larger diaspora and looking to cultural festivals created the ability to look at the creation of home abroad and reaffirmations of their cultural bonds, through the lens of diasporic tourism, a gravely under valorized topic of study (Coles & Timothy 2004, Ioannides & Ioannides 2004, Stephanson 2004, Duval 2004, Esman 1984, Hollinshead 2004). This connection of diaspora and tourism broadens anthropological tourism studies, building upon cultural heritage (Smith 1989, Casteneda 2003, Bregalia 2006, Mckercher & du Cros 2002, Chhabra, Healy & Silly 2003) and spiritual (Gmelch 2004, King 1994, Wood 1998) tourism. It further informs anthropological research looking to motivations for engaging in touristic venues offering felt needs (Graburn 2004, Graburn 1989, MacCannell 1999, Nuttall 1997) of nostalgic yearning (Timothy & Boyd 2003) and self-discovery (Stylianou & Lambert 2011). It challenges the host and guest (Smith 1989, Gmelch 2004) and us and them (Abrams, Waldren & Macleod 1997, Laxon 1991, Palmer 2005) dichotomies, exploring tourism produced, consumed, and experienced by its own members (Coles & Timothy 2004), further blurring the lines (Chambers 1997) of the insiders and outsiders. In turn, this research was able to both contribute to and build on diasporic tourism studies, offering narratives of return visits (Hall & Duval 2004), VFR
(Coles & Timothy 2004, Leite 2005), and nostalgic diasporic tourism (Ioannides & Ioannides 2004, Nguyen & King 2004) providing a platform of diasporic identity formation.

Identity

Illustrating how these touristic venues parallel Third Spaces (Hollinshead 2004, Bhabha 1994), this examination is able to append to studies of authenticity (Teague 1997, McKercher & du Cros 2003, Laxon 1991, Taylor 2000, Chhabra, Healy & Sills 2003), presentation of self and group (Abram 1997, Little 2002, Medina 2006), and ultimately identity (Little 2004, Abrams & Waldren 1997, Palmer 1999, Evans-Pritchard 1989, Appadurai 1996), connecting this research to hyphenated (Coles & Timothy 2004, Radhakrishnan 2003) and hybridized (Ong 1999, Meethan 2004, Duval 2004, Brazeil & Mannner 2003) sense of self and group. This research highlighted how diasporic tourism is marked by an underlying seriousness (Leite 2005, Poria et al 2001) as was demonstrated in the description of these Third Space events, where nostalgic yearning and a sense of belonging neither here nor there (Hollinshead 2004, Nguyen & King 2004) serve as the motivators. This project has shown how tourism serves as the communicative vehicle for participants to de-make, remake (Hollinshead 2004), and perform their identity (Macleod 1997, Bhaktin 1986, Medina 2003, Little 2004), broadening the notion
of incorporating dormant traditions (Little 2004, Medina 2003) and the re-assemblage of
the authentic (Macleod 1997, Cohen 1998). In the end, this research connected the
formation of identity of the diaspora in the Third Space through an anthropological lens
of tourism, showcasing the international students experience of being and becoming.

**Potential Future Research**

While this research contributes to and builds upon much of the literature of
diaspora, tourism, and identity studies, there are multiple directions this research could be
taken or explored more in depth. One of my first suggestions would be to look to other
diasporic student groups such as the Chinese international student population and South
Korean student population, as well as diasporic groups that may be grouped by other
variables such as the Muslim Student Association and their relationships to the local
mosques and the larger diasporic community. It would be both interesting and
informative to identify the similarities between these student populations and their larger
diasporic communities.

It seems pertinent to understand inter diasporic community relations both inside
and outside the international student population such as group composition, partnerships,
and interpersonal and group communication dynamics. Similar to understanding
differences among the diasporic community at large, it would be advantageous to look to
variables of difference among the international student groups themselves through lenses such as gender, religion, states, majors, etc. Finally, I would recommend future research look to students’ plan for after graduation. Participants would broadly discuss the issues of obtaining a visa as many were accused of having no plans to return to India upon completion of their degree. This accusation was the case for some of the participants, as were thoughts about how to bring their families to the US in the future, finding a job on an OPT, and being sponsored for and H1 in the future. These recommendations are in no way exhaustive, but a launching pad of topics I see as vital and significant.

So What Now?

Offering potential future research topics is another way of saying ‘what now’. I had a similar conversation with the participants during this research. While conducting these interviews, I asked participants what sources they used to navigate their arrival, housing arrangements, Mandirs, and how they learned about these Third Space events. The answers were consistently the International Student and Scholar Services, ISO, and Google. We concluded all of our interviews with a discussion of what worked for you, what did not work for you, and what would you recommend. A sort of “so what” conversation; how is it applicable to these various stakeholders addressed in this research and why this research matters in praxis.
What’s Working

International Student and Scholar Services

All of the participants in this research are academically overseen by the University at Albany’s International Student Scholar Services (ISSS) (http://www.albany.edu/isss/). Upon acceptance into the university, international students are contacted by ISSS, outlining the next steps, introducing them to their services, and providing information about the ISSS welcome orientation. Their website includes links to the health center, how to apply for a visa, what to bring, and housing both on and off campus. They provide information on scholarship opportunities, how to apply for a social security number, and social events. ISSS also directs international students to student run groups as a potential resource for cultural specific or special interest events.

Most of the participants in this research attended their orientation, but only a few participated in the full event. The ISSS welcome orientation is held over a period of seven days, walking students through their website, linking students with various academic and administrative departments, introducing incoming students to Albany with trips to the museums, State buildings, and the mall, and closing the program with a dance party. Those who did not attend were late arrivals to the country and in retrospect, shared
a sense of missing out, as did those who did not attend the full orientation as most only
attended a day or two of the program.

Only five of the participants had attended one or more of ISSS’s events. All five
described the various trips they participated in, such as a visit to NYC, a tour of Albany,
and skiing, as being highlighted by making new friends from other countries. All of the
participants saw ISSS as impartial and fair, and identified ISSS as the organization to go
to when you are dealing with legal concerns and academics.

*Indian Student Organization*

The Indian Student Organization (ISO) was cited as the most accessed of the
stakeholders. ISO was discussed in length in Chapter 4 as one of the major sponsoring
organizations of these Third Spaces, and the group that all of these participants are
considered to be members of. Similar to ISSS, ISO offers a welcome orientation, which
serves as a community meet and greet, and an introduction to upcoming events. They
offer a welcome picnic, cricket matches, and host the annual Diwali festival. ISO also
offers programs and services such as yoga and stress management workshops, car-
pooling opportunities, and assistance in housing arrangements.

All but two of the participants utilized ISO’s housing assistance program, at least
peripherally. These participants were interested in linking with other Indians (as
discussed in the Introduction). The two who did not use ISO used Craigslist as was suggested by ISSS. One of those students eventually linked up with other members of ISO and transferred housing. The other member was specifically interested in living with non-Indians. The majority of the participants also relied on ISO for their carpooling program to be transferred from the airport to their new accommodations. Most of the participants admitted to not fully paying attention either at the ISSS orientation or to the ISSS website and materials, but instead relied heavily on ISO members for information.

‘Google’

I asked participants about alternative means to accessing information, especially if they were not tapping into ISSS’s services and in a case where other ISO members may not know, especially in their early phases of arrival where they may not have full contact with members of the organization. The answer was always “Google”. Google was used to locate sect or state specific temples, bus lines, job searches, grocery stores, etc. One member said, “When no one else could answer, Google always had an answer [group laughing]”.

What’s Not Working?

I also asked what did not work and what they would recommend. Most of the participants were reluctant to answer this question at first. They were open to saying what
worked, but when asked for a perceived negative, there was resistance. I was regularly answered with “I am sure they are doing the best they can”. After explaining that I was interested in where there can be improvements for future scholars, participants were more willing to share. As a whole it was expressed that they wished there was one central location to access information about events, groups, networking, etc.

Although there was a reliance on ISO for information about events and social opportunities, participants shared a concern that as student run organization there were imbalances. These imbalances ranged from change in leadership to natural biases towards friends. There was a sense there needed to be a more rigid form of an election process to ensure the potential for all parts of the Indian international student body to be represented. The difficulty is, as is with most student run organizations, there are years where positions are vacant and with the gross amount of responsibility of running an organization to its best potential, a significant amount of time is required, often resulting in a coaxing of members to fill the leadership roles. Similarly, dependent on the amount of time group members have, the upkeep of programming and informational services vary. Many suggested that ISSS coalesce some of the information as they are an official department and as many cited, “impartial”.
Many of the participants felt there was a lacking of access to information regarding job opportunities, career development (resume writing, mock interviews, etc), and mentoring options. Some suggested that there should be a mentorship program, possibly offered through ISO. However, the majority of the participants were computer science majors (21 of the 30) and they identified the two-year program as simply too short… “in the first year, you need the mentorship, in the second year you are applying for jobs and graduating…it’s a no win situation”. They explained that through participation in these Third Spaces, they are often exposed to members of the Indian diaspora who are more settled, and potentially would be a good source for mentors.

During these conversations about what they needed and wanted it seemed as though much of what they were looking for was available through ISSS. Near completion of this research I double checked, and shared the resources I could locate, including job and scholarship opportunities, links to Career Services, and an option to access the list of student organizations, all made available on the ISSS website. It was through these conversations I learned that many had not actually combed through ISSS’s website nor fully attended the orientation. During the orientation, as well as outlined on the website, students were introduced to the ISSS mentorship program called ‘The Buddy Program’. This program connects first year students to returning students as a means to make the
transition in the United States and to the university easier. Beyond just the Indian international students, this program appears to be an underutilized tool for incoming students [refer to Box 6.1].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total # of International Students Enrolled</th>
<th># of New International Students Enrolled in the Buddy Program</th>
<th># of Returning International Students in the Buddy Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1286</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1311</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1481</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What I would recommend

The major concern on the part of the participants was the absence of a centralized platform from which they could access information. As addressed above, ISSS offers information and links to legal information, job opportunities, school affairs, social events, etc. ISO is the preferred source for housing, cultural events, and community gatherings, and Google is the site for any information that may be missing such as Mandirs and extended community networks. It would be a difficult feat for any one of these to offer comprehensive access to all services sought. However, it seems feasible for ISSS to serve as the parent site.

Acting as the parent site would require ISSS to create a links page for the various student groups and organizations from the community. The platform could be a list of the
various serving countries where students could click on their country of interest, including their home country. Their page would have a link to the student groups that cater to individuals from that country in particular, religious institutions when appropriate (Hindu Temple Society of Capital District, Shri Swarminarayan Mandir), cultural organizations in the region (UTSAV, TRICIA, etc), country or region specific grocery stores (Parivar), restaurants specializing in the fare from that country (Karavalli, Curry House), possibly a calendar of upcoming cultural events (although many of these organizations offer such a tool and could prove to be quite time consuming), and a “community bulletin board” for community members and students to connect (particularly for carpooling options).

A good place to start collecting such information would be ISSS consulting with the student groups and international students who have been here for a year or more. Student groups would be responsible for keeping up their pages and it would be pertinent for student run groups to maintain their autonomy. However with the yearly turn over of student organizations’ leadership, ISSS would serve as a consistent entity as a source of information and a site of connecting many of the pieces.

Another component in making this platform work as more than simply a site of information is for the relationships to be built between the university and the extended
community networks. Representatives from the university, and possibly with members of student organizations when appropriate, could visit various locations or leaders of these groups, presenting the goal of this project. At the University at Albany this could happen through various potential offices such as Student Involvement, Community Engagement, ISSS, etc.

The simple act of a university reaching out to the larger diasporic communities has an impact on the institution beyond the student. At the University at Albany there has been a push in community engagement and was reflected as strategic theme 6 in the University’s 2010 strategic plan, with a goal to engage diverse communities in strategic partnerships and to increase public, scholarly, and economic benefits (The University at Albany 2010). Reaching out to various diaspora groups could assist in achieving many of the objectives set forth for the Office of Community Engagement [Box 6.2] and result in Action Step 6.4 to raise the University at Albany’s profile as a hub of intellectual,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 6.2: The World Within Reach: University at Albany Strategic Plan 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Theme #6 Alumni and Community Engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 3: Growing UAlbany as a University for all ages, at the local, regional and State levels, with a special focus on building the K-16 pipeline, life-long learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 4: Increase strategic public and private partnerships to advance economic development, workforce development and entrepreneurial activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 6: Be an active leader in community-building to improve the quality of life in the region and enrich faculty, student and staff learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cultural, and recreational exchange [and to] seek community input and improve ways of communicating information as well as connecting with the public (66).

What Could this Mean for Universities?

This research is especially interesting when looking to higher education and what this could mean in particular for a public institution’s future. As addressed above, it is important for higher education institutions to understand the importance of the extended community network for diasporic student populations. I have demonstrated the impact these networks and Third Spaces have on the international Indian student identity, and I am now suggesting the university play an even larger role in connecting diasporic students to the diaspora at large.

In this research, I have focused on international Indian students and, as addressed above, have called for further research on other international student populations, other diasporic student communities, and from varying institutions. This project has highlighted the international students’ sense of belonging neither here nor there and the Third Spaces through which they gain a sense of belonging and becoming. I am arguing that universities take a more official role in creating a platform (i.e. virtual community bulletin board) to connect diasporic students to their corresponding diasporic communities. As discussed earlier, the dynamic nature of student run organizations
makes it difficult to ensure consistent attention is given to such a task. It is through this platform, that students can connect with the broader community and have access to these Third Spaces. Similarly, this arena could potentially answer the calls for networking opportunities, transportation dilemmas through carpooling, etc.

My research has demonstrated that Third Spaces created venues of renewal, reinforcing, and reinventing diasporic members’ sense of self and group. It would seem to reason that students who feel as though they are a part would in turn be healthier, happier and more engaged (another arena for future research) leading to achieving greater academic success and higher rates of job placement. From this, there are multiple possible outcomes; one of which is the name of the university becomes more visible from both the students carrying on the institutional name and the community engagement efforts, and a second is diasporic students feeling as though their school invested in them.

Universities as a whole can benefit from their investment in international students through connecting them to their larger diasporic communities economically. The current conversations within higher education institutions surround the issue of alternative revenue streams. I was first exposed to these concerns during my tenure as the president of the graduate student body. One potential source of alternative funding identified is increasing enrollment of out of state and international students (Meglio 2008, Tobenkin
2013) as their tuition is considerably higher. This potential is reason enough for higher education to look closer at the perspective of this research, opening many prospective research topics. Similarly, with the reduction in state appropriations, public universities are looking to alternative sources of funding such as increasing international and out of state students enrollment, partnerships with the private sector (Kiley 2013), grants, commercial revenues (Cheslock & Gianneschi 2008), non-degree programs (Matsumori 2013) and individual donors, who are identified as the largest source of funding (Taylor & Anderson 2008).

Many university planning and development departments of public institutions have placed a heavier emphasis on the need for alumni donations as state legislatures have cut their funding to higher education. In Cheslock and Gianneschi’s (2008) research focused on replacing state appropriations with alternative funding sources, they cited “private giving is one of the more promising possibilities” (210). Unfortunately the giving culture is not as strong among the majority of state universities, requiring a culture change among the alumni, starting with currently enrolled students, building a tradition of giving among students.

Studies have found there is a strong correlation between variables such as academic quality, graduation rates, and strong student support, to the willingness to ‘give
back’ (Schmidt 2010). When the question ‘why do alumni donate to their college’ is raised, research indicates the answers are to show appreciation, to provide others with a similar experience, and to stay connected (“Alumni Giving”). “When colleges get it right, they produce graduates who are successful in their chosen path and have an affinity to and love for their alma mater” (“Alumni Giving”). In other words, international students serve as a potential source of alternative funding beyond increased tuition, but as future donors, which has a greater probability if there is a feeling of belonging to, invested in, and supported by their academic institution. With increased institutional visibility and a sense of connectedness to one’s alma mater, a culture of potential future donors could emerge.

**In The End….**

In sum, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Third Spaces, diaspora studies, and hyphenated identities in general and the Indian diaspora in particular, through a touristic lens as was illustrated in Chapter 5. This research not only broadens understanding of new arrivals' immersion experiences and identity negotiations, but also looks to the role and importance of the extended social network of the diaspora. This project lends itself well to diaspora studies, addressing the dual conditions of being and becoming and builds on anthropological tourism research through incorporation of
festivals as the venue of focus. Ultimately, investigating the duality of identity negotiation in the diaspora in connection to Third Spaces can shed light on the hybridized process of being and becoming, further cementing the importance of an extended community to new arrivals. This investigation can further inform international study programs, higher education planning and development, diasporic community agencies, and non profits, lending a voice to the importance and social relevance of culturally situated social networks and spaces to perform one’s identity abroad. It is here that my administrative duties as the president of the graduate student body, passion for performance, and my academic research collide, through interactions with those abroad, I too am being and becoming.
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