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# INDIAN YOUTH NEGOTIATING TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES

ANGELA VEALE AND EMILY KENNEDY

The aim of this chapter is to explore how migrant Indian young people living in Ireland negotiate the normative task of adolescent identity development in the 'here and now' while undergoing acculturative change as a result of migration. Simultaneously, youth are engaged in thinking about the future and they are developing imagined 'future selves'. Migrant adolescents are now growing up in an era whereby migration to a host country may not be a fixed 'end point' but rather a point in time in a process of multiple returns and migrations. Certainly, global communication technology and better access to transatlantic travel means there is less disconnect with country of origin (Bhatia & Ram, 2004). In an increasingly globalised world, there is an important question to be asked as to how adolescents see themselves negotiating their lives now and into the future. This chapter focuses on the psychological implications of how participation in processes of migration may affect Indian migrant adolescent's identity or sense of self? It takes a sociocultural psychological view of the development of "present" and "desired future" identities as embedded in cultural, political and economic processes. It also considers the participants' shifting positions of power/agency or powerlessness as they negotiate identity formation as transnational actors.

Prominent in psychological research in youth and migration is Berry's acculturation strategies model (Berry, 1980). This model refers to four distinct strategies that immigrants may use in a new cultural context. Integration is said to happen when an individual seeks to maintain contact with both native and host culture. Assimilation describes individuals who adapt to the dominant group whilst not maintaining their own cultural identity. Separation relates to those who preserve their cultural identity without seeking to make contact with the host group. Marginalisation relates to those who appear to be confused and lose ties with home culture but do not develop a clear orientation towards the host culture. In a study of immigrant youth in 13 countries, Berry et al., (2006) found that only a third of youth demonstrated an integration profile, which predicts consistently more positive outcomes than alternative strategies, and the remainder were more or less equally divided the other profiles. Research with South Asian adolescents aged 13-18 years in Britain found that the majority of Indian youth adopted integration strategies whereas Pakistani Muslim youth fitted an ethnic or separation profile (Robinson, 2009).

Recently, Berry's acculturation framework has come under sustained critical reflection. His model promotes an illusion of stable psychological identifications among migrants and fails to capture how macrolevel processes such as changing economic and political circumstances in the lives of migrants who are experiencing change, may be inextricably intertwined in immigrant identity (Lichstinn and Veale, 2007; Hermans, 2001a). Bhatia (2008) has argued that the model fails to address the psychological impact of migration for identity as it does not account for the dynamic, "culturally distinct and politically entrenched experiences" of transnational migrants (p.225). It also does not capture the impact for migrant adolescents of growing up outside their homeland as part of transnational diasporas. "Transnational diasporas" are communities that "forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Glick-Schiller et al, 1995, p. 48). Kleist (2008) argues that in academic writing, a "diaspora" is often characterised as a marginalized community which experiences social and cultural problems in adapting to life in Western countries. On the other hand, in political contexts, the term may denote "agency, solidarity and resources" (p.1139). There has been little exploration in the literature of adolescent's identities as participants in diaspora communities. Political leaders in India and Ireland have recognised the potential for members of the respective diaspora to act as transnational political actors in the reconstruction and political development of their countries[1]. How do migrant adolescents position themselves in this political domain? Importantly, a sense of

[1] In 2006, during the fourth annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (celebration of the homecoming of global Indians), the Indian Prime Minister recognised the potential for members of the Indian diaspora to act as transnational political actors in the reconstruction and political development of India. A similar point was made by the Irish President, Mary McAleese with respect to harnessing the power of the Irish Diaspora. President Mary McAleece, Address to the Global Irish Economic Forum, Farmleigh, Dublin, 18-20 September, 2009. http://www.europeanirish.com/news_details.php?news_id=1091

agency and solidarity with homeland may relate to how migrants negotiate identities within transnational diaspora communities. More interestingly, perhaps we can ask how do adolescents themselves negotiate this acculturation journey?

Research to date suggests that this acculturation journey places special demands on the developing identities of young migrants. Naidoo (2007) notes that among the Indian diaspora in Australia, parents' greatest fear is that their children will become too "Australianised" and begin to relinquish the core cultural values and practices of their family. Indian parents also tend to establish strict rules for their children's' behaviour in order to exert some control in the face of cultural change and foreign influence. Naidoo (2007) also argues that religion and religious affiliations in the host country are used by parents in order to instil core cultural and religious values in the second generation.

Similarly, Das Gupta (1998) notes that during the process of negotiation, Indian migrants to the USA make a considerable effort to maintain their Indian identity in their host countries and to resist cultural change. They familiarise the next generation with their Indian heritage and traditions through their participation in cultural celebrations and communal festivals in the host country. Physical links with the homeland are maintained through frequent trips to India, while psychological ties are fostered through a process of reinventing "Indian culture" in the host country (Bhattacharjee, 1992). In global, diasporic societies, Bhatia and Ram (2009) ask "Who carries the burden of transmitting 'culture and traditions' across generations and taking on the responsibility of acculturating their children in the new world" (p 143). These studies suggest that parents are invested in the developing identities of young Indian migrants and expect their children to resist cultural change and retain important aspects of their ethnic identity.

Talbani and Hasanali (2000) conducted a study exploring the social and cultural experiences of 22 adolescent girls of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in Canada. The participants (15-17 years) were second-generation immigrants who had been educated in Canada. A key concern identified in their study related to parental control of socialisation, going out, parties and dating. Many of the participants discussed the restrictions they faced with respect to socialising, especially with members of the opposite sex. The researchers noted signs of change in the traditional power or family structure as participants discussed their changing dress codes, less frequent participation in community activities and increasing levels of dissent. Talbani and Hasanali (2000) note that their participants expressed dissent with parental control in different ways. Some rebelled openly against their parents, others went "behind their parents back", while some suppressed their feelings of frustration and accepted the expectations of their parents. Naidoo (2007) argues that many Indian families migrate because they are motivated by the prospect of being able to provide their children with better educational opportunities abroad. Educational and economic success is highly valued by the Indian community and regarded as an honour to the family (Naidoo, 2007). Desai and Subramanian (2000) note that "many parents are willing to experience downward mobility in their careers and social status as they see it as a sacrifice they are making to ensure a better future for their children" (p. 60). Naidoo (2007) argues that children of the Indian diaspora are thus, often under a great deal of pressure to perform well academically and take on professional careers that are highly valued in the community. As such, the migrant families tend to resist cultural changes in this regard and strive to maintain their high standards of education regardless of the surrounding academic standards.

Yet acculturation theory is limited in its ability to provide insight into the complex identity processes of adolescents journeying as transnational migrants. For adolescents in our study, identity and a sense of a future self is being formed in a context where culture, macrolevel political and social 'markers' are also changing. One theoretical lens recognised to be potentially useful for this study is the theory of the dialogical self, proposed by Hermans and Kempen (1998). Hermans and Kempen argue that in an era of increasing globalisation and transmigration, it is useful to conceptualise the self as a dynamic, multivoiced and dialogical entity. This notion challenges the existence of both a core essential self and a core essential culture (Hermans, 2001b). While the rational self is believed to be "context-free" and separate to society, culture and history, the dialogical self is defined with respect to its historical and cultural context (Fogel, 1993, as cited in Hermans (2001b).

In this model, the self is conceptualised, not as one coherent voice but instead as a multiplicity of different voices in different and relatively autonomous I-positions expressing their own ideas and accompanying and opposing each other in a dialogical relation. Hermans (2001a) argues that when an individual migrates to another country, a number of new "I" positions may enter the subjective horizon of the self. He notes that these new positions may find themselves in conflict or may coexist relatively independent of each other. It is also a possibility that they may fuse so that hybrid combinations emerge in the form of multiple identities (e.g. African American). The self is not therefore necessarily unified, continuous or organised but may be pulled in many

different directions by internally inconsistent or externally driven forces. In response to this process, an ongoing negotiation of identity takes place. According to Hermans (2001b), the asymmetry of dialogic relations is critical to our understanding of the dialogic self. He challenges such notions as the "integration strategy" which assumes that the migrant individual can freely choose between two or more cultural positions. He argues that conceptions such as this, fail to acknowledge the tensions and power relations which may exist between different I-positions localised in time and space.

Bhatia and Ram (2009) argue that psychology as a discipline has only recently begun to recognise the advancements which have been made in postcolonial and diaspora studies, in developing understandings of the migrants' experiences of acculturation. They argue that researchers need to explore the larger historical, socio-cultural and political structures that are inevitably implicated in both acculturation dynamics and the formation of immigrant identity (Bhatia and Ram, 2009,) In dialogic terms, Bhatia (2008) argues that we need to think of acculturation as process rooted in history, culture and politics which involves an "ongoing, contested negotiation of voices from here and there, past and present, homeland and hostland, self and other" (p.37). Embedded in this may be asymemetrical power relations between the majority and minority world, particularly in a globalised world. Hermans (2008) notes "In particular, the uncertainty and instability of a globalizing world increases the desire for stability, safety, and survival as universal biological needs"( p 32), and draws attention to what he refers to as the shadow side of globalization: neoliberal international market-driven approaches to economic and social policies, the removal of job certainty in the middle and lower classes, and terrorism. Transnational migrant adolescents have to face the challenge of adapting not only to their (situated) local culture but also to global society. Hermans (2008) argues it is likely transnational adolescents develop a bicultural identity but this is an under-researched area and needs further understanding.

The Asian population in Ireland accounts for 1% of the population, just 46,952 individuals in a population of just over 4 million people (CSO, 2006). However, while important studies have examined the experiences of African, Latin American and returned Irish migrant children and youth in Ireland (Ni Laoire et. al, 2009;Bushin and White, 2009), Asian youth have been largely invisible. Bearing the above literature in mind, this chapter seeks to explore how Indian migrant adolescents' living in Ireland negotiate transnational identities.

## METHODOLOGY

Six participants (4 boys and 2 girls) of Indian nationality participated in the study. Inclusion criteria were adolescents (13-18 inclusively), shared nationality among participants, recent migration to Ireland (within past 3 years); and ability to speak and understand English fluently. Four focus group discussions were conducted with all participants and each discussion lasted 60 minutes approximately. This allowed for topics that emerged in focus groups to be reflected upon by the researcher and brought back to the group for further discussion and analysis. Following this, the six participants also participated in paired interviews each lasting approximately 50- 60 minutes. Pseudonyms are utilised in the analysis. Participants were as follows: Avani, (female aged 15 years), Rahul (male, aged 14 years), Nikhi (male, aged 14 years), Pranav ( male, aged 15years), Jyoti (female, aged 13 years), and Anand (male, aged 16 years).

A constructivist approach to grounded theory is employed in this study (Charmaz, 2006). Through the method of "constant comparison", the analysis engaged in a process of simultaneously identifying similarities and differences between the meanings and experiences of participants. Respondent validation (Pigeon, 1996) was incorporated into interviews and discussions. For example, if participants emphasised certain words or terms in their narratives, they were asked to explain what the terms meant for them. Memos were used to develop conceptual ideas. In the course of this analysis, it became evident that a dialogical perspective was required that brought attention to the different voices and counter voices in the transcripts and also their emotional character (anxiety, uncertainty, confidence), and the ways in which adolescents positioned themselves with respect to forces of globalisation (e.g. a future transnational job market). The transcripts were read utilising dialectical principles (Hermans, 2008) addressing the tensions evident in the data. Using dialectical principles in a grounded-theoretical analysis has precedent in sociocultural research (Rawlings, 1998).

## ANALYSIS

### *Agency and power(lessness) in transnational migration*

In making the decision to move to Ireland, the participants' reported that their parents wanted to avail of transnational opportunities and enhance the future prospects of their children. Rahul explained that his father had always aspired to live abroad and notes that his parents anticipated "*a better education...and a better life like"* for their son in Ireland. Avani and Anand both suggest that their parents were motivated to migrate by the prospect of making and investing money in a world of global currency opportunities.

> Avani: But the thing is if you look at euros and rubles, they were bigger, ya like one euro is like almost sixty rupees so like yeah that's a big thing…so if we work here, when we go back we will be probably very rich.(laughs)..yeah so that's why she came here..

Most interestingly, four of the six participants had lived in other countries as well as having lived in India before their move to Ireland. Avani had previously lived with both parents in the Middle East when one parent got a job in Ireland and she decided to move with her mother to Ireland. When asked how she felt about moving to Ireland, she responded:

> Avani: I...first of all I disagreed, that I won't come because...I dunno, I just you know...just don't want to make up new friends...I had so many friends there and then you come to this new country and…like everyone knew me in that school like and then when you come here, you are...I know the feeling of changing schools....

With an emphasis on *knowing* the feeling of changing schools, Avani. is letting us know that she is an experienced migrant, she knows what is involved, and this made it a difficult decision. She conveys agency and choice in noting that she disagreed with moving and that she would not come, but then '*I dunno, I just you know...*' possibly also indicates a lack of power in this being truly her decision. As an adolescent caught between dependence on parents and emerging self-responsibility, this dialectic tension is conveyed in this sentence. When asked about this, she noted:

> Avani: Back then I just said, yeah because I missed my mum so much so ok if she's staying there (Ireland), ok let's go…Yeah I had been living with my Dad for more than a year so...yeah so that time I missed my mum really because I didn't talk much to her and it would take a lot of money and so I just went and to tell the truth, I didn't know there was a place known as Ireland (laughs)...seriously yeah (laughs) because when I looked at the map I was like...ok she is telling Ireland…where is that?
>
> Rahul: .. yeah Ireland was like low in nurses and stuff.

The external, authoritative voice of her mother is conveyed by 'OK, she is telling Ireland." and her own confusion "*Where is that*?" Avani is a member of a growing number of transnational families separated because of parents work. Rahul chimed in to explain the workplace demand in Ireland for nurses "*and* "*stuff*" as explanatory, conveying simultaneous understanding and confusion.

Rahul also exhibits this dialectical tension of agency-powerlessness in the familial decision to migrate:

> Rahul: I didn't want to come over here like, but first time I said, I'm not coming..I'll stay here with my grandparents or something..but then I just came and I liked it here.

Nikhil was the only participant who felt that it was fully his choice to move. He explained that his parents gave him the choice of remaining in India in boarding school, and he feels is was his own decision to move to Ireland. As will emerge in the analysis, all participants experienced their migration to Ireland as one destination country in a possible open-ended migration trajectory.

### "*They don't want us to change but we are changing"*

In early focus group discussions, the group were very interested to talk about how they felt they had changed as individuals since moving to Ireland. The group highlighted an identity position- the "good" Indian boy or girl- as one they struggled with. They explained, for example, that their parents expected them to be "good" Indian boys and girls and avoid changing "too much" in response to Irish culture. Identification as a "good" Indian boy or girl was found to be loaded with cultural and gender specific meanings for the participants. For boys, it appeared to evoke mainly moral connotations. A "good" Indian boy is identifiable as a boy who refrains from drinking and smoking, respects his elders, goes to church, catechism and confession and does not have a girlfriend until he is over the age of 18. A "good" Indian girl, on the other hand, evokes both moral and cultural

connotations. According to Avani, a "good" Indian girl is identifiable due to her devotion to God, kindness to others, appropriate dress, ability to cook, to take care of the house, and ability to be shy, that is, to be demure while still capable of asserting her rights.

Avani notes that her parents have adapted their expectations somewhat, with regard to how Avani can identify herself as a "*good*" Indian girl in Ireland. Avani also asserted that she feels a "*little bit*" more free to express herself in Ireland and gives and an example that she tends to think less before shouting at her mother during an argument. It appears that some identity positions can be incorporated more easily than others and that this may depend on the participant's level of flexibility regarding older identity positions. For example, Anand continues to hold a firm belief that "You should have some respect for your elders" and when he sees Irish peers being disrespectful, he wants to "get at them and hit them" and it makes him very angry. He exercises personal agency in maintaining his core value. On the other hand, as a member of a minority group in Ireland, he is forced to accept the behavioural norms of the majority group around him which he experiences as a position of powerlessness.

Rahul is also negotiating the dilemma of incorporating conflicting positions of identification in his developing identity. Rahul, however, finds himself in opposition to his parents as he begins to identify with the freedom of Irish teenagers.

Rahul: Irish people, they are allowed to go out anytime they want..but like, our parents will be mad if we're going out with girls and stuff..They just want us to be…

Pranav: "Good boys"

As part of forging his own autonomous identity, Rahul has adopted different values which stand in conflict to the values of his parents. For example, Rahul's parents do not approve of their son dating a girl in Ireland and that they think "it's wrong" and "if you do that you are going to go to hell or something". Rahul's beliefs in this regard are reinforced by his understanding of cultural "norms" in Ireland and in this way we can see that migration to Ireland has affected his sense of values and identity.

Rahul: Like I don't see anything wrong with it like…it's normal to like someone...

In negotiating his own personal autonomy in this situation, Rahul explains that he is seeing a girl in Ireland but he has not told his parents. Similar to Anand, Rahul appears to feel a certain degree of frustration as he engages in the process of negotiating between two conflicting identity positions and notes "sometimes you feel like you have to be like a saint or something". When asked to reflect on how they feel they have changed since moving to Ireland, the group all concurred that there was a shift in the part of self relating to parents and through that relationship, to Indian traditions and culture:

Pranav: Our behaviour to our parents (laughs)

Rahul: If I was in India I would be more obedient but here I'm not as much as in India, at home or in school like India is changing to like it is in Ireland, it's changing to European style.

Researcher: And how do you think your parents feel about that?

Pranav: They want us to keep up the traditions like……they don't want us to really change too much to the culture.

Avani: Our culture has been attacked for some years, like you pass it down to your children and like.

Rahul: They don't want us to change but we are changing.

There is recognition that it is their parents' responsibility to pass on their cultural heritage which has "been attacked" but also an agentive push that although 'they' (their parents) do not want them to change, but the participants themselves note " *we are changing*". These findings point to the way in which participants can be forced to negotiate between conflicting and assymetrical identity positions as they participate in migration.

*Facing a transnational threat to identity*

A significant part of the change participants notice in themselves is an emerging critical voice with respect to their homeland. Their dialogue shows evidence of a developing politicised voice that is becoming more socially aware but also is working out their own 'situatedness' in respect to the different socioeconomic and social welfare models of Ireland and India. Most interestingly, these different structural models are very 'live' for them as they grapple to understand that the choices they make now as adolescents in their work ethic and education will impact their future adult identities. As they talked this out, one of the negotiations they are engaged in as participants in transnational migration is to manage identity tensions in the 'here and now' that may impact on positions they may occupy in the future in different socioeconomic and political systems. This is sparked by an emerging political consciousness. Rahul begins this discussion:

> Rahul: Because since I came to Ireland I don't really like India now because if I compare Ireland to India, it's a way dirtier and… and like people don't really care about other people in India and…there's no peace...there's robbery and crime and everything.
>
> Avani: Yeah, like just last summer I went to India and I saw India in a way I usually didn't see...Like just before I went, a few months back, we did this recycling project. But then I went to India and I was travelling a lot, I did notice at that time that there was a lot of rubbish and something had to be done…I usually didn't notice that because I was used to it. I didn't know why the government wouldn't do anything about that. Then I asked my eldest cousin why they don't do something here and she said that it had to do with the economics and everything….

In the positions adopted in discourse, there is a distancing from an identification with India that begins in observations in daily life and develops into a critical political position that has to do with "economics and everything". In the discussion, Avani emphasised the inefficiency of the government in India. Rahul noted the greed of the politicians and their apparent neglect of the poor. Avani blamed politicians for sustaining religious division, while Nikhil stressed the occurrence of violent political strikes and "dirty politics". Rahul's growing sense of identification with a "happier", more "peaceful" life in Ireland, is clearly shaped by his personal experiences of political unrest in India. Two of the participants in this study (Anand and Nikhil) lived in the suburbs and felt that they were not "affected" by politics. They appeared to desire, and identify with, the freedom of Ireland to a lesser extent than the other participants but also felt that life was easier here. Nikhil relates this to an observation that "like, Irish people get more support from the government like". The researcher asked Nikhil to tell more about what he meant:

> Nikhil: Well, if you are unemployed, like they will get money...or monthly payments or something and social welfare and that kind of stuff...and they can keep up their family when they are elder like...but like in our country, we don't get...the government won't support us...so if we don't study and if we don't get good marks and no job, it will be hard for our future. the government helps people out here .
>
> Avani: Yes, in India job that is best to get in India is a government job because it is secure, a job that you know you will have like. Sometimes you can get a pension from that in your old age like but I don't want to work in my country...believe me I don't want to get in that stress...in that hot place (laughs) so I am going to work abroad and maybe only settle in India when I'm old like.

An observation that some Irish people get support from the Government quickly moves from an observation about external social conditions to an introjected identity threat about what it means for self to live in a system without social protections. Security emerges as a very central concept in their discussion, the dialectic opposite of insecurity. "Working abroad" offers security but in India, education is your security to order to be competitive in a challenging job market, which would get you "*in that stress*" (emphasis in original). Stress is not desirable. This brings an inner conflict. A 'good' Indian boy/girl closely tied to school and good grades. There is a threat/danger if you do not do well at school. As a good education is so closely tied to parental and cultural values of success, they struggle to negotiate their personal positions, resisting the stress associated with the need to succeed within the Indian to but suspicious even derogatory of the perceived more relaxed attitudes of Irish peers. This indicates that the values and beliefs of the participants are fluid in nature as they shift between different positions of identification and negotiate between the contrasting Indian and Irish value systems and systems of education. For example, they enjoy feeling less pressure at school to a certain extent:

> Rahul: ..if I was in India, I would get a better education but like there would be more pressure on me.

Similarly Avani noted "If you study in India you will probably be way smarter but it's quite a tough life..".

On the other hand, they identify strongly with the persona of the 'unchallenged' student.

Anand: We don't have much competition here..you know if you want to be the best you have to compete against the best

Avani: That's the thing about Ireland, we are the only competitors...they don't want to compete (referring to Irish people)...they agree that we are smart but they don't want to like fight with us and I get bored like,...in India that's what happens...when you study, you have to study more so that you become number one...no matter what. ...if you go back, you are going to be dumb, we are going to be dumb actually (laughs).

Behind this is the threat of what it means as members of a transnational community should they fall behind real or imagined peers in India.

The participants shared the view that they would have poor job prospects in India as a result of their studies abroad, as Anand notes, "You can study in India and come out, but you can't study out and go back in for a job. You can go in but…". For the participants, their sense of self is distilled with a sense that they have the potential to be successful and the desire to actualise their potential in this regard. Yet their involvement in migratory processes, and their perception that they are availing of a lower education level in Ireland, has led to them fearing that their desired identity in this regard may come under threat upon return to India, particularly if they were to try and get a job there as their friends would me "*much more intelligent*". Avani, Anand and Rahul all expressed anxiety that their identity as strong performers to date, would come under threat in India:

Rahul: If I go back to India, I will probably fail everything.

Avani: That's why I'm scared because my mum is considering that we will go back....in India, maths is one of the toughest subjects...it's a little bit harder to go back then and do really hard stuff and that's why it scares me because when I go back I will be totally blind, I wouldn't know what they're doing at all. I might be even two classes behind which means I will be maybe two years elder than I should be.

This dialogical tension between security-insecurity is a source of anxiety for all participants and in particular causes Nikhil to feel a significant sense of regret. Speaking from an agentive, choosing, 'I' position, he takes ownership of his decision to migrate but this has emotional consequences as he rejects a possible position of dependency on parental decision-making and locates responsibility for any consequences of that decision within himself.

Nikhal: I think I am more secure in India.

Researcher: Ok…can you tell me why Nikhil?

Nikhal: I don't know…I think always that if I stay in India that my future would be more secure, I will get a good job or something like that…I don't think I'm secure here because the education level of here compared to over there is much different… I'm thinking like that I made a bad decision to come over here (leans forward and lowers head almost to his knees)

Researcher: Ok…but was that your decision Nikhil?

Nikhal: Yeah it was mine (sits upright again)....my family came over here first but they asked me if I wanted to come over here or stay studying there in boarding school.

A sense of psychological 'safety' for participants depended on the extent to which they were able to perform well on key culturally-expected tasks for adolescents, such as doing well in school. This also gave them confidence in their developing present and future identities. While peripheral values could be adapted more easily as seen in the last section (dress, eating habits etc), the participants' comments show that a threat to a core identity positions ("to be the best") can cause considerable anxiety and insecurity. This is particularly the case as they perceive they are likely to experience future migrations and this is as yet unknown. There is a developmental tension also, most evident in Nikhal's account, of being caught between positions of dependency and autonomy. In claiming personal responsibility for the decision to move, Nikhal even begins to feel a considerable degree of regret. While exercising his own personal agency in "choosing" to come to Ireland, he now grapples with what he perceives as the negative consequences of his decision.

*Future selves-multiple possibilities.*

This section explores adolescent's negotiation of identity in an environment of significant uncertainty as members of transnational families whose parents are willing to move with the ebb and flow of global opportunities. In their dialogue, participants talked of their imagined future possible selves. Markus and Nurius (1986) defined possible selves as "self knowledge (that) pertains to how individuals think about their potential and their future"; that is, "selves that we would very much like to become," "selves we could become," and "selves we are afraid of becoming" (p954). For participants in this study, foremost in the factors that impinged on thinking about 'selves they would very much like to become' or 'selves we are afraid of becoming' was uncertainty about future return or migrations. Settling, thinking about settling, not having a chance to settle, suddenly moving was part of Avani's experience and in the following utterance, there is a sense that she is trying to take control of this in thinking about her own future. She initially positioning herself within the social group of all Indians, of whom 'no one tries to settle abroad' to formulating her own plan which will involve leaving Ireland.

> Avani: But no one tries to settle abroad because, I don't know, it's like, every time you think about settling, you don't want to. Now my mum and dad never thought they were going to come here. Everyone thought we were going to go back but suddenly we just moved and we couldn't settle in India again because we came here. It was like**, fast**...I didn't know, I thought we were all going to go back, you know, everything was going to be normal but then we just came here and everything changed. So every time we think about settling, something happens that we don't have a chance to settle…I will maybe stay in Ireland until my studies (laughs) but after that I will go.

It emerges her view of the future, that of future migrations, is shared by all members of the group. One of the group points out that Rahul will be moving to Australia and he clarifies that this will take place after his Junior Certificate (a State examination in secondary school) as his mum is getting a job there. Pranav announces "I might be going to Australia too...and Nikhil too..". Anand comments that there is a kind of rumour that most of the Indian community are going to Australia as jobs are bring lost in Ireland and there will be less money to be had and says "Yeah like many of the Indians lost their job here...like in the hospitals in Dublin and stuff". The researcher asks about whether the migration route itself is important:

> Researcher: So they are thinking it makes more sense to go to Australia from Ireland rather than from India to Australia.
>
> Pranav: It's because you get PR (Permanent Residency) there if you go there.
>
> Rahul: But what do you think? Would it be better to go from a third class country or from a first class country...I mean like would they take you as seriously going to Australia from India as from Ireland?

Most interestingly in the above analysis is the young people's inclusion of macrolevel political factors such as migration laws (being able to achieve a status of Permanent Residency) and the development status of different nation states as factors in possible migrations. This is integrally tied to identity and the desire to be a person that is taken seriously. A 'self' that Rahul for example, might be afraid of becoming is someone who is not taken seriously and someone that is perceived to be from a 'third class country'. The dialectical tensions of opportunity/threat and security/insecurity identified in the previous section in particular crystallises for young people around their future selves. For Nikhal, the struggle to negotiate the threat to his core value of education and the perceived threat to his desired "future self" was confounded by the political consequences of migration. In returning to India, he would also have to deal with the difficulties associated with a new political status.

> Nikhal: ..if I go back I will be a "Non Resident Indian"..so if I want to join the army or something like that, it could be difficult for me.

The participants comments suggest that in order to understand present identity challenges, it is important to understand the core values of the participants in the context of their desired "future self". It seems that the participants will experience less psychological stress if they can find a way to reduce any threat to their core identities and thus preserve their future "desired self"

### *Identifying as a Transnational Agent of Political Change*

During the course of the research, both Avani and Anand evidenced a strong sense of political and patriotic loyalty to their own country. Both recognised negative aspects of life in India but identified themselves, as members of a "future generation" with political responsibility to their country of origin. It is in this context

that a strong identification of I-as-Indian is evident. This is provoked by reflection on the external threats to India posed by terrorism, which in turn mobilises a strong national identity and identification with the collective 'people' of India. An agentive and powerful I-as-disaspora also emerges for some of the young people who articulate an ongoing sense of connection and responsibility. On the contrary, others in the group recognise internal and external threats to their home country but they dissociate themselves from responsibility to solve the problems and do not feel any power as part of the diaspora.

Rahul: That's why I don't really like India that much...because of that...Like the people are like destroying the whole India, like you know the thing that happened in Mumbai.

Nikhil: That's Pakistan (Pranav agrees).

Avani: … The thing is...even though India is dirty , you know polluted and has like the dirtiest politics I have ever seen, I still like it because, you can't just say you hate your country and be away from it. You have to be, that's patriotism, you can't just say you love your country and do nothing. You have to go there, experience it and try to solve because you are the people, you have to do something.

Rahul : You can't do anything.

Pranav: That's democracy- for the people, by the people...you know.

Anand : That's what democracy means and our country is one of the number one democracies, still now, although the government is made by the people, the government...they make false promises that the people just don't get. Now only they realise that so we have to fight back. We are, what do you say?

Pranav: The future generation.

Avani: The future generation who are going to handle that country like.

Anand is considering returning to India and therefore can exercise his political responsibility upon his return. However, Avani is intending to remain abroad to pursue other personal ambitions. Two aspects of Avani's identities are therefore in conflict: her ambition to succeed abroad and her simultaneous identification as one of "people" of India who has a political responsibility to her country. We suggest that Avani negotiates this dilemma by identifying herself as a transnational agent of political change. Her comments reveal that she sees herself as one of the many "educated" Indian citizens abroad, who can return at election time in order to bring about political change in India.

Researcher: But Avani, did you tell me earlier that you weren't going to go back to India?

Avani: Yeah...(laughs)

Researcher: So where will the future generation be who are going to make this difference?

(Pranav points at Anand and all laugh).

Avani: No like I will go and study abroad, I will work a little bit abroad but I will come back and vote and everything…if educated people from abroad come back to India… they might pick a good Prime Minister who might actually know what is happening in this country like.

Avani's identification with this group is strengthened by her assumption that educated Indian citizens abroad, the Indian Diaspora share her belief that political change is needed and can have influence in the future. In identifying as a transnational agent of political change, Avani appears to negotiate the challenge of incorporating new identity positions within the self while simultaneously preserving her core values and "desired future" identity.

## CONCLUSION

As a result of their active participation in the process of migration, the participants in this study are engaged in a process of negotiating their developing transnational identities. While living in Ireland, the participants are expected to maintain and foster certain aspects of their ethnic identity including cultural values, traditions and religious practices. These findings clearly support the findings of Naidoo (2007) and DasGupta (1998) who noted the resistance of Indian parents to cultural change and their commitment to instilling core cultural and religious values in the second generation.

Participants have also begun to identify with other aspects of life in Ireland. These positions of identification were unavailable to the participants prior to their migration to Ireland, but they now draw on these identifications as they engage in critical reflection of life in India as they become politicised. Identity processes are clearly embedded in dynamics of globalisation and the full from the majority (poorer) world to the opportunities in the minority (wealthier) world. However global recession beings uncertainty and the migration trajectory is opened ended in the imagination and lives of these young people. Dialectics of adventure and uncertainty sit beside those of security and insecurity. While adolescents live their lives in the 'here and now', they are struggling to keep open a future that has many possible 'future selves'- in Ireland, a move to another country, a return to India. This presents challenges both to the fixed categories of Berry's acculturation theory and Hermans' (2008) contention that it is likely transnational adolescents develop a bicultural identity.

Participants experience threats to a future successful identity. The value they place on education and their determined drive to succeed appear to be compromised by their perception of a lack of challenge and lower education system in Ireland. The participants are clearly negotiating their developing transnational identities as they find themselves simultaneously identifying with the lack of pressure in Irish schools but they also identify strongly with the persona of the "unchallenged" student. The findings of this study lend further support to the Dialogical Model of Self as the participants' comments suggested the fluid nature of their identifications as they shifted between different positions of identification and negotiated between the contrasting Indian and Irish value systems and systems of education at different times and in different contexts.

It appears that due to their experiences of a threatened identity in Ireland, the participants and their parents have engaged in a process of changing their future migration plans. In light of the perceived lower standards of education in Ireland, they are also considering a move to other, more competitive locations and young people show a readiness to avail of transnational opportunities once again in order to enhance their future prospects.

Due to her participation in the process of migration, one of the participants in particular is forced to negotiate her own personal drive to succeed with her strong sense of patriotic and political responsibility as an Indian citizen. While she feels that her own personal prospects are better supported abroad, Avani identifies as a member of the "future generation" and thus feels a strong sense of patriotic and political responsibility to her country. Avani appears to negotiate this dilemma by identifying as a transnational agent of political change within a diaspora community who can bring about political change in India from the outside. In this way she manages to actualise her personal drive to succeed abroad, while simultaneously upholding her political responsibility as an India citizen. In dialogical terms, it might be argued that by engaging in this process of negotiation, two relatively autonomous "I" positions have fused to form a hybrid combination in a developing transnational identity.

For all participants, there is a sense of trying to hold a lot of different balls in the air as they imagine future identities in their country or origin, Ireland or a third country. They convey their openness to multiple journeys of return and migration in a globalised world of opportunities across different geographic locations. This is also fuelling insecurities in their lives in the current moment as they try to prepare for a future that may make many different demands of them within different socioeconomic and political contexts.

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